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OCTOBER ISSUE 2009

Australian Content

Official Magazine - Australia

GUITAR HERO 5 • NEED OR SPEED SHIFT • FIFA 10 MARVEL: ULTIMATE ALLIANCE 2 · AND MANY MORE!



FINAL VERDICT!

BATMA

into Metal Gear turf!

HUGE EXCLUSIVE!

DRDERLANDS

The most innovative shooter ever?



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW!

ONG THIEVES

Everything you need to know about the world's best PS

REVIEWED!

IN McRAE

Thrashed and smashed!

NEW SCREENS!

FIRST MODERN WARFARE 2 MULTIPLAYER DETAILS EXPOSED



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FRONT



ASSASSIN'S CREED II

Sébastien Puel and Patrice Desilets talk about Italy, Da Vinci, and getting away with murder. Page 44

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GUITAR HERO 5

What do Shirley Manson, Johnny Cash and Carlos Santana have in common? Insider has the answer. Page 11



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Your favourite heroes and villains go toe-to-toe in this four-player super-power special!

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Sweaty men? Check. Lycra? Check! We get physical with the latest wrestling sensation!







5 × DRAGON DYNASTY DVD PACKS!

5 x DOUBLE PASSES TO WATCH PONYO + STUDIO GHIBLI DVDS

10 x BATMAN: ARKHAM ASYLUM COLLECTOR'S EDITION SETS WORTH \$150!



SUBSCRIBE NOW! CALL 136 116 AND RECEIVE FAST & FURIOUS ON BLU-RAY! SEE PAGE 30!





WELCOME!

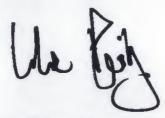
e can't remember a beginning of a year as crowded as Q1 2010 is set to be. For those who don't drive Audis to work and don't own more than one tie, Q1 is what high-powered suits call January, February and March.

Q1 2010 has become a veritable dumping ground for anything that publishers don't want to send up against Modem Warfare 2 largely thanks to the fact the first one has sold 14 million copies, and this one is available with night-vision goggles.

There are a few titles that can and will hold their own this Christmas, many of which will likely become a complimentary purchase alongside Activision's all-conquering shooter, but the result of all this shifting may mean the audience is divided even more.

The reason for this is that there's somewhere in the vicinity of a billion games coming out early next year. BioShock 2, MAG, Singularity, Bayonetta, God of War III, Heavy Rain, Darksiders, Dante's Inferno, Aliens vs. Predator, Dead Rising 2, Lost Planet 2, Mafia II, Red Dead Redemption, Split/Second and Dark Void are just some of titles I can think of from the top of our head. Throw Gran Turismo 5 in there too, presumably coming out sometime between the end of this year and, say, the Apocalypse.

They might as well push Christmas back until March while they're at it. Give them extra time to polish it.



LUKE REILLY EDITOR

PSN: Capt_Flashheart PLAYING: IL-2 STURMOVIK: BIRDS OF PREY **WANTING: UNCHARTED 2: AMONG THIEVES**

OPS ON: SUPER POWERS



STEPHANIE GOH

Teleportation! Purely for the convenience of going to party capitals on the other side of the world and back. Plus, sitting on a plane is booogring.

PSN: TBA Playing: Batman: Arkham Asylum Wanting: Uncharted 2



PAUL **TAYLOR**

Always pulling the correct change or bunch of notes out of my pocket, no matter the item - carton of milk, bus ticket, Ferrari would be extremely handy.

PSN: paulgusta Playing: Need For Speed SHIFT

Wanting: Tekken 6



JAMES COTTEE

The power to control probability would be the only power you'd ever need. You could do anything, really. Picking up would be a breeze.

PSN: DrWho3987 Playing: Monster Hunter Freedom Unite Wanting: Borderlands



JAMES ELLIS

The ability to fly would be nice, but how do you monetise it? Pizza delivery? Courier? No. Incidentally. heists would be far easier when you're invisible.

PSN: gtfaster49 Playing: Batman: Arkham Asylum Wanting: FIFA 10

PlayStation Official Magazine - Australia

EDITORIAL & DESIGN

EDITOR: Luke Reilly

luke@derwenthoward.com.au

DEPUTY EDITOR:

Paul Taylor

CONTRIBUTORS:

James Ellis, James Cottee, Anthony O'Connor, Toby McCasker, Dylan Burns, Amy Flower, David Kozicki, Wyatt Hunts, Chris Stead ART DIRECTOR: Stephanie Goh

CREATIVE DIRECTOR:

Paul Cook

PUBLISHING & CIRCULATION

MANAGING DIRECTOR: Nick Cutler

CIRCULATION ENOUIRIES: (02) 8305 6900

PRODUCTION MANAGER:

Graham Hood

ADVERTISING & MARKETING

GROUP SALES MANAGER: Alex Brereton

alex@derwenthoward.com.au

(02) 8305 6909

MARKETING MANAGER: Vanessa Morgan

HOW TO CONTACT US:

TEL: (02) 8305 6900 FAX: (02) 8305 6999 EMAIL: ops@derwenthoward.com.au Derwent Howard Pty Ltd P.O. Box 1037 Bondi Junction NSW 1355

WANT TO SUBSCRIBE?: 136 116 (NZ RESIDENTS +61 2 9282 8000) Fax (02) 9267 4363 www.derwenthoward.com.au/subs

MANAGEMENT

DIRECTORS:

Jim Flynn, Nathan Berkley FINANCE DIRECTOR: Sandy Barnes

MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTANT: Stuart Harle

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SHOUT OUTS: KJR :: Vinnie, happy first birthday! :: Nicole :: Mark Serrels :: Elissa @ www.edesign101.com.au :: Rebecca :: Snez :: Cam :: Zac

SIDER 1





Gaming's latest and greatest





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He's adorable when
he's happy, but he's



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THE MAN IN BLACK

Cashing in on dead celebrities!

ctivision has announced multiple Grammy Award winner, Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee, music legend and all-around dead bloke Johnny Cash will make a posthumous appearance, and his first in a videogame, in *Guitar Hero 5*. Johnny Cash's 'Ring of Fire' is one of the featured tracks on the disc, although we imagine more will follow via DLC.

Cash will join Shirley Manson from Garbage and guitarist extraordinaire Carlos Santana. We're also being led to believe Kurt Cobain will star in *GH5*, which will mean half the cameo cast is actually deceased.

Jimi Hendrix, also dead, featured in *Guitar Hero World Tour*. Activision is clearly committed to expired rockers.



60

Need for Speed SHIFT We're superexcited about helmet-cam

Batman: Arkham Asylum So hot, we finished it twice.



District 9
New movie
about aliens.
Peter Jackson
hearts it.

Modern Warfare Prestige edition Awesome or



Prestige edition
Awesome or over the top?

Operation Flashpoint special ed. Helmet + dog tag = wtf?

Ghostbusters online Wrong map version?

g 💀 🖸

SS 🖀 🔡



iPhone voice memos 17 minutes is 42MB. Storage busting!

PRICE CUT?

necdotal evidence is flooding in from retailers around the country that suggest stock levels of the 80GB PS3 have hit rock bottom, and they can't get any more – forcing retailers to sell what they have left on shelves.

This could mean a number of things, although our money is on Sony clearing the channels in preparation for a new model and a price drop. It's in Sony's best interests to move any and all existing stock before said revelation lest they be left compensating retailers.

Rumours floating out of Europe suggest a PS3 Slim is on the cards, and that it's closer than we all think. At the time of going to press, Gamescom – the European equivalent of E3 – is less that a week away. We expect an announcement regarding this will be made there, and we'll be able to confirm so next issue.

A price drop just in time for Christmas will likely have a very positive impact on console sales, and it shouldn't hurt the bottom line either. It has been reported the PS3 is now 70 per cent cheaper to produce than it was at launch.

IN SHORT...



Although Half-Life 2: Episode 3 is as elusive as the G Man, Valve's Gabe Newell has undertaken research in to how sign language can be used in the game, by hosting a focus group with deaf people.



The legal stoush between Activision and Double Fine Production over the release of *Brütal Legend* has been settled outside of court. Activision sued Double Fine claiming it still owned the publishing rights.



Koei "Ninja Gaiden" Tecmo has expressed interest in Sony's new motion controls. Kenji Matsubara, president of Koei, said, "We have to... provide the games to satisfy that [hardcore] playing style."

Screentest and more



ROCK BAND CONTINUES TO GET OUR ROCKS OFF

armonix and MTV Games have announced the *Rock Band* Network, a community-based system that will give musicians and record labels the ability to author their own original recordings into gameplay files and sell their music as playable *Rock Band* tracks through the newly-created *Rock Band* Network Music. Store.

"Our goal with Rock Band has always been to go beyond making music games and create a true music platform," said Alex Rigopulos, CEO and co-founder of Harmonix. "With the Rock Band Network, we've evolved the platform to its next logical step, giving players access to an incredible amount of new music by putting the professional tools we use in the hands of the artists themselves."

The Rock Band Network will launch as an open beta in late August 2009 in the US and provide a sophisticated toolset, with detailed documentation on how bands can begin the process of authoring songs into Rock Band gameplay files.

Once tracks are approved, they will be transferred to the Rock Band Network Store, an in-game music marketplace where players will be able to demo samples of the songs for free before they purchase. Initially the system will be native to the Xbox 360, but tracks will also be made available for PS3.

The Rock Band Network will likely result in an explosion of new music joining the 750+ tracks already available on the Rock Store.

Rock Band has seen quit a surge in DLC recently with tracks from Marilyn Manson, Greenday, Weezer, Kiss, Kings of Leon and Blink-182 becoming available. At the time of going to print the soundtrack for This Is Spinal Tap (featuring 10 Spinal Tap tracks including 'Tonight I'm Gonna Rock You Tonight' and 'Stonehenge') has just been released, and Pearl Jam's ninth studio album Backspacer will be made available on the Rock Store on September 20, the same day the album is released.



NUMBER CRUNCHING



Percentage of household broadband subscribers who have a download speed of 1.5Mbps to 8Mbps, as of December 31, 2008



ALEC MASON

SEPARATED AT RIPTH

NO. 8 Brazilian bombshell Max Payne - leff Bridges

Max and Jeff used to have hair on their heads where most men like it. Taking it to the next level though, beyond their matching alopecia, is the complimentary grizzled old-man beard with patches of grey. And, fellas, Lou Reed called: he wants the creases in his face back.



Top 10

TOP 10 MOUSTACHES

Face it: moustaches are manly. It takes perseverance and patience to keep follicles under control and past the point of itchiness. For some, it's destiny. Here's a decade of dudes with righteous whiskers.



Snake, when he isn't trying his luck with the ladies, is all business. You could set a watch to his haircut and his 'tache is like a ranking stripe on a uniform. Gentlemen, if you want to look like a respectable stud when you're older, look to the Snake.



MASTER CHOP CHOP

PARAPPA THE RAPPA SERIES

While he's sporting a fu manchu like his martial arts cousin Law, Chop Chop's is more than a cliché: it's an appendage. If Chop becomes upset his otherwise smooth mo turns in to a zigzag of despair. Just don't drop the beat or Chop Chop will drop you.



CAPTAIN PRICE

CALL OF DUTY MODERN WARFARE

This walrus/handlebar-with-sideburns combo is a top effort, and it runs in the family (play *Call of Duty 2*). It's a distinguishing mark of an esteemed gent not afraid to get involved when King and Country demand his services. We're saluting right now.



SANDER COHEN

BIOSHOCK

So, your fashion sense has led you to dress up like a French waiter who moonlights as a mime. Cap off that lady-slaying, obsessive-compulsive psycho look with a fastidiously manicured pencil moustache – the Corpse Photography club won't let you in without it.



MARSHALL LAW

TEKKEN 4

Law's lip fur adds striking, sharp lines to his face, and if you turn his head sideways and imagine his eyebrows and mo were punctuation marks, they'd look a lot like >[. That, friends, is the emoticon of a very ticked-off man who would be pleased to make your face a cushion for his foot.



REVOLVER OCELOT

METAL GEAR SOLID 4

Whether he's known as Revolver Ocelot or Liquid Ocelot is pure semantics: dude's a villain, and he's carrying a well-groomed mo' that'd make Angel Eyes from *The Good The Bad and The Ugly* proud. Hell, it's so evil (and given a bit more mass) that reserved handlebar wouldn't look out of place on Stalin.



JOHN MARSTON

RED DEAD REDEMPTION

Life for an outlaw in the Wild West is inversely proportional to the time it takes him to loosen half a dozen bullets from his favourite shooting iron. He isn't going in for a job interview here, kids. Dude's got no patience for vanity. Plus, those ugly scars that disrupt the flow of hair make him look totally bad-arse.



ZANGIEF

STREET FIGHTER SERIES

As Yakov Smirnoff might've said: in mother Russia, the 'tache grows you. That untamed forest thrusting out of Zangeif's face is a hairy representation of an angry, bearwrestling man. We bet he's still got bits of yesterday's breakfast buried inside it.



KING OF ALL COSMOS

KATAMARI DAMACY SERIES

The alcohol-fuelled King has a cavalier attitude, and that full-bodied jaw is the perfect canvas for the swashbuckling pencil-cum-Belgian Detective. As a result it's impossible to take him seriously, yet he is the man in charge. Perfect for all belligerent royalty.



CAPTAIN BLUE

VIEWTIFUL JOE 2

A man of power needs a tache to match: clipped, with sharp, angular points. Capt Blue's got that, and (in *Viewtiful Joe 2*) he has respect. It almost compensates for the off-putting 'outie' that's poking below his skin-tight top.



Where to now?

EXPLAIN YOURSELF

What's worse than Nazis? Zombie Nazis, naturally. But what's worse than zombie Nazis? Vampire Nazis! Why? Because they also want to drink your fluids, but they're smarter and faster. They're also cleaner and more charismatic, so you're more likely to let one into your house accidentally for schnapps

THE STORY

While hunting Carpathian chamois in Romania, SS head honcho Heinrich Himmler is set upon by Dracula, who is a quite a fan of the region's unique goat-antelopes. Now a vampire, Himmler sets about turning the entire SS into immortal bloodsuckers.

HOW WILL IT PLAY?

An open-world sandbox with a full day/night cycle, BJ the Nazi Vampire Slayer sees everyone's favourite OSS agent spend his days cooking Nazi vampires under the hot sun and his nights thrusting stakes about.

PROBABILITY

Come on, this is a sure thing, isn't it?

EXPLAIN YOURSELF

RoboNazi is programmed to follow four prime directives: 1. Squash the public trust, 2. Persecute the innocent, 3. Uphold the war, and 4. (classified). He's part man, part machine, all Nazi



WOLFENSTEIN: ROBONAZI RISIN

WILL IT

PLAY?

hooter origins, Wolfenstein:

oboNazi Rising will be a pure

ealth game, with the normally gung-ho BJ playing it sneaky

in order to get the drop on his nanomechanical nemesis and

his army of robo-drones

THESTORY

Tired of being thwarted in their attempts to harness the powers of occult, the SS change focus and set about building incredibly powerful Nazi cyborgs that will crush any and all enemies of the Fatherland. RoboNazi is first of these unflinching goosestepping machines.

PROBABILITY HOW

You've all played games with far worse foundations than this, seriously, Bucking its first-person

WOLFENSTEIN: BJ THE NAZI VAMPIRE SLAYER

Well, conventional Nazis are What now fi a bit old hat th give ot in the arm with an even ming's ultir ? Read on... evil direction for ga

EXPLAIN YOURSELF

Three words. Communist Nazi terrorists. A combination of the three biggest bogeymen of the 20th Century! Sure it makes no sense, and sure they'd wake up every morning wanting to kill themselves thanks to multiple conflicting vet completely simultaneous ideologies but that's what makes them so dangerous!

THE STORY

After being thrashed in WWII, the surviving Nazis begin a war of terror on the US. Invasion U.S.A. crossed with Red Dawn. Like, Nazis trying to blow up school buses and firing rockets into people's homes on Christmas Eve and stuff, Evil

HOW WILL IT PLAY?

A series of hilarious EyeToy based minigames that see you thwarting various potential attacks by waving your arms around. We're not sure yet.

WOLFENSTEIN: NAZI DAWN

ROBABILITY

Do we have to say communist Nazi terrorists again? Somebody get a damn chequebook,

EXPLAIN YOURSELF

Nazis from space. Crazy huh? They'd be just like the Borg in Star Trek, we imagine, but their ships wouldn't be cubes, they'd be swastikas! Wait, no - they'd have their own Death Star! Come on, they were even called stormtroopers for crying out loud! Done.

WOLFENSTEIN **EPISODE 1:** THE NAZI MENACE

THE STORY

The Nazis are actually revealed to be shapeshifting totalitarian aliens from outer space bent on ruling the whole galaxy. Earth is next on their agenda.

HOW WILLIT PLAY?

Flight-based space blasting in an alien UFO that BJ has commandeered from a secret underground Nazi base deep in enemy territory. The battle for our Earth won't take place on it!

PROBABILITY

Mixing WWII with sci-fi? It's the best of both worlds!

AROUND THE WORLD IN PS3

OPS trawls high and low for what's going on around the globe in gaming



NEW YORK, USA CITY BANS GAMING

While driving, anyway. The New York State Senate has passed a bill that bans gaming, texting, surfing the web – basically the use of any handheld electronic device. "This is a long-overdue safety measure for New York," said Senator Martin Dilan "Texting and burgeoning [portable electronic] technologies continue to pose serious, and sometimes fatal, distractions to drivers of all ages." Fair enough.



TEXAS, USA BIG, BIG BOSS

We want to see this in Saints Row 3. George Vera was charged for illegally possessing a firearm which he hid between his rolls of fat. Vera, who weighs roughly 225 kilograms, was initially arrested for selling counterfeit CDs and searched three times, but was only discovered to be carrying the gun once he was in the prison showers.



TUVA, SIBERIA PUTIN ON A SHOW

Forget Solid Snake, Sam
Fisher and Sev from Killzone.
This generation's incredible
hero is the Russian president,
Vladimir Putin, who recently
undertook a series of incredible
adventures to boost his image.
His escapades took him rafting
down fast-flowing rivers and
strutting through fields in
an Indiana Jones-style hat,
amongst other activities.



TOKYO, JAPAN BREAST OF THE BEST

A caveat: we don't have the exact address of where this took place, however Koei Tecmo have launched a viral marketing campaign advertising their latest release in their ninja action game, Ninja Gaiden 2 Sigma by sticking a pair of fake breasts on a wall somewhere in Japan. We don't get it either. Check it out at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=14x3fFSZgFg



SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA WINE NOT

Another campaign we've fallen for. Gamers around the world rose on August 9 to find dozens of wine bottles, stuffed with posters, half-buried in to the sand of iconic beaches, including Bondi Beach in Sydney, teasing BioShock 2. The event came after clues were posted at somethinginthesea.com. Props to those who showed up just after dawn to dig 'em up.

INTERNATIONAL CHARTS







EASE SCHEDULE

Coming soon to a store near you...

SEPTEMBER 2009 OCTOBER 2009



GENRE: ACTION DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS



OF: Dragon Rising GENRE: SHOOTER DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS





The Saboteur GENRE: ACTION DISTRIBUTOR: EA Ratchet & Clank: A

Crack in Time

GENRE: ACTION DISTRIBUTOR: EA

GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT

GENRE: RTS
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT

DECEMBER 2009

Avatar

B.U.S.E.

LEGO Rock Band

GENRE: MUSIC DISTRIBUTOR: WARNER

BROTHERS INTERACTIVE



Blur GENRE: RACING
DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION



Darksiders



Crysis 2



Heavy Rain



Dante's Inferno



Tony Hawk: Ride



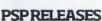
Battlefield: Bad Company 2



BioShock 2



Final Fantasy XIII GENRE: RPG DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT



Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines NOVEMBER 2009 GENRE: ACTION DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT

GTA: Chinatown Wars SEPTEMBER 2009 GENRE: ACTION DISTRIBUTOR: ROCKSTAR



Colin McRae: DiRT 2 GENRE: RACING DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS



GENRE: MUSIC DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION



FIFA 10 GENRE: SPORT DISTRIBUTOR: EA









GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: 2K

TBC, EARLY 2010



MAG GENRE: SHOOTER
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY



Red Dead Redemption GENRE: ACTION DISTRIBUTOR: ROCKSTAR



Gran Turismo 5 GENRE: RACING DISTRIBUTOR: SONY



Just Cause 2 GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO
BANDAI PARTNERS



God of War III GENRE: ACTION DISTRIBUTOR: SONY



Singularity

Tekken 6 GENRE: FIGHTING DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS





GENRE: ACTION DISTRIBUTOR: THQ



GENRE: ACTION DISTRIBUTOR: EA



GENRE: ADVENTURE DISTRIBUTOR: SONY



GENRE: ACTION DISTRIBUTOR: EA



GENRE: SPORT DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION



GENRE: SHOOTER DISTRIBUTOR: EA



GENRE: SHOOTER DISTRIBUTOR: 2K





OCTOBER 2009 GENRE: RACING DISTRIBUTOR: SONY



II -2: Sturmovik: Birds of Prey GENRE: FLIGHT DISTRIBUTOR: AIF

Mini Ninjas

GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO
BANDAI PARTNERS

Heroes Over Europe

GENRE: FLIGHT DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT

Need For Speed SHIFT GENRE: RACING

DISTRIBUTOR: EA

Guitar Hero 5

The Beatles:

GENRE: MUSIC DISTRIBUTOR: EA

Rock Band

Cross Edge

GENRE: RPG DISTRIBUTOR: AFA

GENRE: RACING DISTRIBUTOR: AIE

Alliance 2

Marvel: Ultimate

GENRE: RPG DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION

SuperCar Challenge

GENRE: MUSIC DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION





Uncharted 2:



NBA 2K 10 GENRE: SPORT DISTRIBUTOR: 2K



Alpha Protocol GENRE: RPG DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA



Brütal Legend GENRE: ACTION DISTRIBUTOR: EA



NOVEMBER 2009



Assassin's Creed II GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT



Modern Warfare 2



Dragon Age: Origins







GENRE: SHOOTER
DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION

QUOTE UNQUOTE Industry chatter, inside tips and loose lips



"It's part of human the game world and your characters." Chris Avellone, lead creative designer, on sex in Alpha Protocol.



"The good news is that was wrong with the first game." Kyle Brink, from Sega Studios San Francisco; the team working on Iron Man 2.



"[The quality] is not something where you and say [we're going to improve] and it magically happens." Sega marketing VP Sean Ratcliffe on Sonic.



'I'm sure a lot of people had a human face and could talk." Yoot Saito, creator of Seaman. Er, sure thing.

AUSTRALIAN CHART



Fight Night Round 4



inFamous



UFC 2009: Undisputed



COD4: MW GOTY



Prototype



Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10



COD: World at War



Call of Juarez: BIB



Guitar Hero World Tour



FIFA 09

THE WITCH HUNT

uman beings are tribal creatures; we work together, for and against the progress of our race. Cave paintings in the days of yore depict swarms of us bearded bastards pounding Mammoths for prehistoric wooly grubbage – and it took more than one bloke in the booth to successfully put a man on the moon.

History is full of examples of humanity's prowess when we gang together and get busy. The Pyramids in Egypt. The Colossus of Rhodes. In fact, having a quick gander out of my office window I can see the Sydney Harbor Bridge – a miracle of engineering, testament to man's collective will and resolve.

But there's a dark side to this group mentality – fascism, ultra-nationalism. It was a group mentality that made plenty of Germans think that the holocaust was a 'cool idea', and it was America's need for conformity and solidarity that allowed Senator McCarthy to put the fear of communism into the hearts and minds of every US citizen in the 1950s. There's nothing like a 'War on Something' to bring people together into a dangerously racist harmony of hate and fear.

These days we find both sides of humanity's need for community reflected in the modern day Wild West that is the World Wide Web. The internet is the global village manifest – a completely lawless melting pot of ideas, an enormous cultural juicer where ideas are thrown together blindly, and subsequently smelted down into one tangible, ever flexible, endless information flow.

And again, when we work together we can do great things. Wikipedia, for example, is an incredible source of user created content. Facebook is a great way of keeping in contact with faraway friends you thought you'd never see again. The internet can be an awesome, super helpful way of navigating through our new digital world.

But in the dark recesses of the web, sticky with the grease of grotesque fanboy slobber, is the ever-repulsive video game forum. A hive of scum and villainy, a poor excuse for ventage of the most self-indulgent kind – a place where original ideas are shot down before they become fully formed, a space where idiocy is given a free, unmoderated reign.

Case in point – Grand Theft Auto IV. The decent and correct opinion, that GTA IV is an incredible achievement, has been beaten down by the collective will of an idiocracy determined to dismiss it as self-indulgent garbage. Play Saints Row 2 instead, they'll say, it's more fun. Are these people serious?



Apparently yes, and now these buffoons are at it again. Conincidentally enough, it's

another Rockstar title.

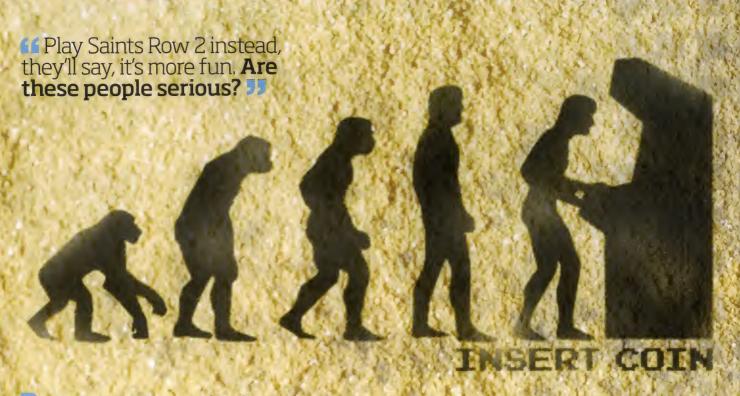
When Rockstar unveiled Max Payne 3, complete with an overweight, bald, bearded Max, the forums baulked. Any and all curiosity with regards to Rockstar's innovative new direction for the series was instantly crushed by the sheer weight and pressure of collective vitriol. To these troglodytes, Max Payne must be shoehorned into a tiny cage and be

forced to suffer the rain and darkness of the noir aesthetic for the rest of time. For many gamers, the desire to learn is a distant second to the desire to bitch.

It's all part of our need to homogenize

everything. With gaming CEOs quoting Metacritic rankings as opposed to specific praise, and developers pandering more and more to the needs of simply the morons who shout loudest, we're accelerating towards the vanguard of gaming mediocrity at a startling rate. Slowly but surely, individual taste is becoming nullified, replaced with a collective numbness – a need to agree with each other and belong. Ultimately, it's the games themselves that will suffer.

Angry Sackboy is an ex-videogame journalist with low tolerance for fickle fanboys.



IL 2 STURMOVIK Birds of Prey

IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey is based around large-scale aerial combat over the ground-based military operations of World War II. Players participate in the war's most famous confrontations piloting fighters, battle planes or heavy bombers across a range of thrilling missions.

Environment and landscape visuals are taken to new heights through the utilisation of satellite photography, authentic wartime photos and historic documentation.

IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey also boasts a tangible damage effects engine where players will see real-time damage to the aircraft such as bullet holes through plane wings and trail lines in the sky during dogfights.

Available 3 September 2009

www.il2game.com

















IL 2 STURMOVIK

IL 2 STURMOVIK



IL2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey ©2009 © 1C Company. Published by 505 Games. Developed by Gaijln Entertainment. © 1C Company. Developed by Gaijin Entertainment. Published by 505 Games under license by 1C Company. Portions of this software utilize RakNet 3.0 networking software (©2008 Jenkins Software LLC). RakNet is a trademark of Jenkins Software LLC, All rights reserved.



MORPHOGENESIS OF THE CELL



hen Sony gave birth to the PS3, it did not start life as the beast we see before us today. Back then, deep down inside its liquorish black outer coat, there was an innocent, budding young Cell Processor – little more than a fledging glimpse of life. Like all cells it started to feel around and get a taste for its surrounds. It slowly started to develop and interact with the world around it. At first its communication with other organisms in the gaming universe,

like software, was crude and coarse, but over the years it began to evolve and take on a shape and personality to which the others responded. It began to take an active role in the ecosystem, even daring to command and rule. By the end of 2009 the morphogenesis will be complete. The PS3 is about to arrive, proper.

This was apparent to anyone that visited this year's E3. Not only was Sony's software range varied and vast, but technically impressive. From the photo-realism of *Heavy Rain*, to the spectacle of *God of War III*, through the genre-busting *MAG*, Sony's VIP booth in the upper halls of the LA Convention Center was an oasis of awesome above a hall of disappointments. Head and shoulders above them all was *Uncharted 2: Among Thieves*: easily the game of the show, it looks a million bucks, and plays like a billion.

I managed to chat extensively to Naughty Dog's Richard Lemarchand, colead game designer on *Uncharted 2*. He spoke enthusiastically about how much the developer's understanding of the PS3 had grown between the two games. More interestingly, he also spoke about a secret developer within the Sony family called The Ice Team. This studio consists of the

very best developers at Sony and they are hard at work on base code elements that maximise the power of the Cell.

These code elements are referred to as the Edge Tools and it's a two-way street. So if The Ice Team is working hard on things like frame-rate and sound mapping for everyone, if Naughty Dog was to make a breakthrough on animations, that information was shared back down the line. This hub of activity ensures that there is a constant evolution in the quality of the PlayStation software at a base level.

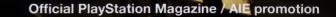
Given the quality of Sony's games at E3, it is clear that these Edge Tools are really starting to make an impact. And knowing that this code is being readily shared amongst all PS3 developers should be music to your ears as it reveals that this Christmas line-up is no fluke. It marks the moment that the PS3 begins dropping software bombs that rattle the competition for the rest of this generation.

You made the right choice.

Chris Stead is a veteran games journalist with a large collection of festival hats. 1000 years ago they made Vikings that looked like Chris Stead.

66 Uncharted 2: Among Thieves... it looks like a million bucks, and plays like a billion ****





Bf-109

WIN! 10 COPIES OF IL-2 STURMOVIK: BIRDS OF PREY

hanks to AIE we've got 10 copies of the awesome IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey on PS3 to give away to 10 eagle-eyed readers (also available on PSP). We've hidden five planes from the game throughout the magazine. For a chance to win a copy of the best flight game we've ever played, send us the page numbers that you find the following WWII birds of prey on, along with the answer to following question:

If you were a fighter ace, what would name would you give your plane?

Entry details can be found on page 25.















Opinion



OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION AMY FLOWER

NO CREDIT WHERE CREDIT'S DUE

his space was going to contain a reasoned discussion about the various pros and cons of the trend towards DLC. However, after an experience this evening 'was' is now the operative word, for a flood of insanity drowned my train of thought in a flurry of appallingly mixed metaphors.

It seemed a simple idea. Download a game from the PlayStation Store with one credit card and then get the DLC for this particular game with a different credit card, a gift Mastercard with about \$6 remaining. A quick jump into account management was cool, changes made, accepted, then time to do the fun bit – shopping!

But no, Sony's stultifying concept of funding a virtual 'wallet', rather than just paying for individual purchases like in any normal economy, meant that a minimum of \$10 was required. It's certainly better than being forced to buy into some silly propriety currency, but why we can't choose exactly how much to add is a mystery.

1111111

Okay then, fine Sony, you win this round. I'll give you access to my credit card with the limit that startles me every time a statement darkens my doorstep and buy my pissy \$4.95 worth of content (reason is, my real life car appears in a certain racing game which may or may not have the letters 'G', 'T' and 'I' in its title, and as I can't hoon around like I'm out on a track day every moment of real life, this seemed a vaguely desirable, if ultimately feeble, alternative).

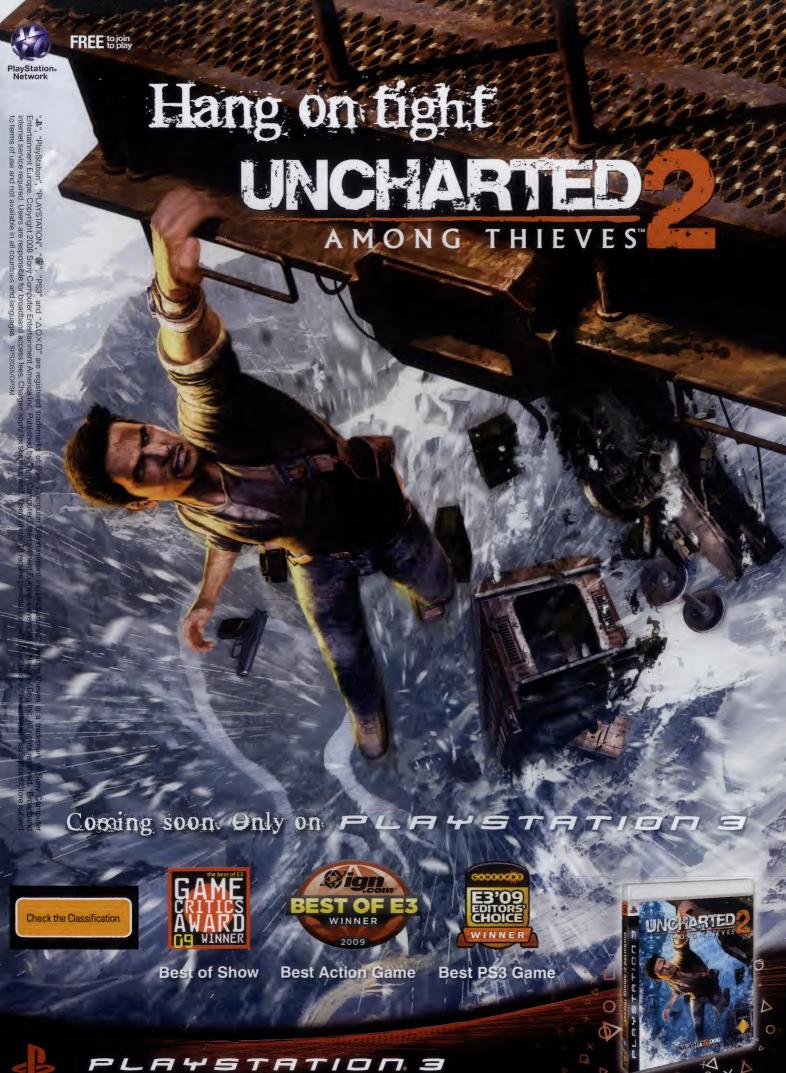
In my experience, Sony has never been particularly averse to absorbing my money into its coffers. Call me a brand whore, I really don't give a fig, but they've generally given good product so I've given good cash. Raise your hand if you shelled out \$699 on day one of the first PlayStation release. Bugger, it's kind of awkward typing with a hand in the air.

Back in credit card land, however, I entered all my details – correctly. They were subsequently deemed incorrect, and I was told to check them. I did as much, doubting that I'd screwed up in the first place. Still no dice. Mrrf!

Alternate attack time – I'll try adding funds via the 'net. Same shit, different screen. Yes folks, it appears that nobody really wants my money – or perhaps they just want a few more of my brain cells to evaporate in smoky puffs of illogic first?

Granted, Sony probably needs more practice when it comes to this thanks to fact the PlayStation Network is free to begin with. It probably makes sense the big S aren't as good as taking our cash as, say, a company that asks you to pay to play. Still, the PlayStation Network's system of robbing our credit cards needs a little tweaking as far as I'm concerned. For now, I'm off for a blat in my real car. It still loves me – and has no qualms whatsoever in guzzling my money.

Amy Flower obviously relishes biting hands.



OMPETITIONS



ENTER THE FIST

Thanks to Roadshow we've got five Dragon Dynasty DVD packs to give away. There's something for all martial arts fans in this Dragon Dynasty DVD trio: Fist of Legend is essential viewing for any Jet Li fan, Robin-B-Hood is a two-disc set, loaded with special features appealing to martial arts enthusiasts and Jackie Chan fans and the best of Asian fighting styles are put to the test in the Shaw Brothers classic, Heroes of the East.

For the chance to win these DVDs pitch us, in 25 words or less, the perfect kung-fu movie. Entry details on page 25.

DOUBLE PASSES TO SEE PONYO + STUDIO GHIBLI DVDS

GONE FISHING

To celebrate the theatrical release of Ponyo by Studio Ghibli, written and directed by the legendary Hayao Miyazaki, we've got five double passes for the film thanks to Madman Entertainment. Better yet, Madman will even throw in some great Studio Ghibli DVDs including Howl's Moving Castle, Spirited Away and Princess Mononoke! Ponyo: only at the movies August 27.

For the chance to win simply tell us your favourite Studio Ghibli film and why. Enter details on page 25.









To enter Official PlayStation Magazine competitions email your entries to ops@derwenthoward.com.au with the name of the competition ONLY in the subject line. Email entries are entitled to one entry (multiple entries will be deleted!). Alternatively, send clearly marked postal entries to OPS competitions PO BOX 1037, Bondi Junction 1355. Please include your name, age and address with your answer on the back of an envelope. Chance plays no part in determining winners. Competitions close 06/10/2009. Winners will be notified by mail.

BOX

Speak to us!

LETTER OF THE MONTH!

KNOW **Call your boss. Get a haircut** YOUR ROLE

ello everyone at OPS,
Let me start by expressing my deepest gratitude for your great consistency with the mag. It never fails to impress me and I look forward to the new issue every month.

Well, it all started on the day I had purchased the long awaited Street Fighter IV. My blood was boiling from anticipation over the painful months leading up to the release and, like a lot of people, I had lined up and bought it on the 20th of February.

Naturally, after using my DualShock 3 for a while, remaining unsatisfied with the experience and being the Street Fighter afficianado that I am, I of course looked into buying the top quality Tournament Edition FightStick that was released along side the game, or at

ello everyone at OPS, the very least the Saturn style FightPad in order to enrich the experience.

After shopping around online and finding nothing I decided to duck into my local GAME and ask around to see if they have it or can tell me where I can find one. I approached the Acnestricken, emo-fringed worker and asked if they had the MadCatz **Tournament Edition** FightStick in stock - the one that was released with Street Fighter IV. And to my disgust this guy looked at me as though I had tried to explain to him the properties of Quantum Physics.

He had no idea what the HELL I was on about!

Well, I attempted to explain the concept and after a heated discussion that lasted a good 10

minutes he had the nerve to look me in the eye and in all seriousness say to me, "Listen dude, I don't think they exist."

Well, my point is that if I, a hardcore gamer, cannot rely on the guy who works at GAME to at least know about hardware and be able to help me buy what I'm after, what hope is there for those casual gamers who do not have knowledge of games and actually NEED workers to help them buy a top of the range game?

In my opinion jobs at places like GAME and EB Games should be reserved for those who know their stuff when it comes to games. Any thoughts? Daniel Ibrahim, via email

We agree. They're specialty stores, and thus need informed staff like any other specialty store. There's nothing worse than asking someone a question in a store (videogames or otherwise) and discovering said staff member has no knowledge of anything they're selling. Good luck finding one of those sticks though – they're about as rare as rocking horse shit at the moment.

SPEAK TO US

Love the mag? Hate the mag? We want your opinions and questions on *OPS*, on games – on *anything* that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins the Game of the Month! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:

OPS Feedback
Derwent Howard
PO Box 1037
Bondi Junction, NSW 1355
ops@derwenthoward.com.au



DATE HATE

hy do publishers and developers announce games so early? I hate knowing a game I want is coming out six months beforehand. Sony is the worst at it, it announced *Killzone 2* in 2005 but it didn't even come out until 2009! What's even worse is when a game company announces a game and says it's coming in four months and then four months later says it's still coming.

What do you guys think? When is it the right time to announce a game? If you ask me I think it should be a month out that a game should get announced. That gives just long enough for hype to build up but not too long that people get sick of waiting.

James, ACT

We don't like waiting either, but if publishers only announced games a month out from release we wouldn't have much to write about, would we? There wouldn't be an OPS, there wouldn't be an E3, there wouldn't be a Tokyo Game Show... nope, it wouldn't work. Publishers and developers need time to build awareness, spruik features, butter up retailers and generate pre-orders. You can't do this in four weeks! Waiting is a pain, but it's been the same with films and albums forever, so we'll all just have to suck it up.





CORRECTION

fter reading your August issue I thought that I would get in contact with you people to bring your attention to a couple of points. In your article '10 Real-Life Hard Bastards That Make Kratos Look Like a Pussy' you mention about the Medal of Honor, calling it the 'Congressional' Medal of Honor. The medal is frequently, albeit incorrectly, called the 'Congressional Medal of Honor', stemming from its award by the Department of Defense "in the name of Congress". In addition, for Herbert K. Pillaau you say he "closed in for some CQC." By CQC I'm guessing you mean 'Close Quarter Combat' which is not the commonly used term. CQB or 'Close Quarters Battle' is the more commonly used term.

Other than those minor things keep up the good work. Seeing the August issue in my care package from home really brightened my day. Not that the days need to be much brighter in Timor Leste. I look forward to the September issue next month.

James Bogle, via email

Thanks for steering us in the right direction James; we hope you still enjoyed the feature! Timor, huh? Nice one – glad you still keep up to date with PS3 with OPS! How about it, do we have other readers serving overseas at the moment? If you're in Timor, Afghanistan, Iraq or anywhere else drop us a line and let us know what's on your mind and what you'd like to see in OPS!

IT SHOULD BE A GAME!





M*A*S*H 4077TH

By Jeremy Scott, via email

o I recently purchased the entire M*A*S*H series boxset and whilst devouring many episodes it struck me that this would translate into an awesome cult videogame!

A perfectly balanced blend of *Trauma*Centre and Call of Duty set in the midst of

the Korean "Police Action". You play Casper "Whitey" Fergusson, wise-cracking regular army surgeon and recent transfer to M*A*S*H 4077. Everyone's favourite characters feature (with original actors providing the voices of course) as you spend the first portion of the game honing your surgical skills in camp. Suddenly the camp is overrun! You must spend the remainder of the game first person shooter style making your way to the capital city, dispatching aggressors and providing aid as the situations arise. Imagine the sound of Korean army boots tramping 20 metres from your position as you gently tilt the SIXAXIS to make a life saving incision?



AVAILABLE AT [JB HI-F]

BOX

Speak to us!

CUTTINGS GET THE

GOOD GOD!

Is there any chance that God of War III could get banned in Australia?

Alexander Brown, VIC

We'd be pretty damn surprised if it was, although stranger things have happened when Australia's classification legislation is involved. Still, we wouldn't really worry about it for now.

PS3 BROKE

I'm scared that by the end of the year my wallet's going to be filled with nothing but dust and game receipts

Khaya Mpehle, NT Ditto.

SACKED

Angry Sackboy has nothing on me and I will tear him to tiny little Sackboy shreds...

John-Paul Murphy, via email

We'll let him know, although he fights dirty. Just a heads-up.

POINT

ey guys, been reading the mag for a while and decided to send in a letter.

Well, I was reading the last edition you guys had and came across a valid point. We get a lot of Trophies from games but when you're done you just think, "What now?" We don't get anything from getting all those hard-earned trophies and I'm not trying to make the Xbox 360 sound good but when you get Achievements you get Gamerscore which you can use to purchase DLC for games. So I was thinking what if they made a system for the PS3 where if you get Trophies you get money?

Another topic is co-op. Co-op is great and I love sitting down playing games with friends and family but lately there hasn't been much co-op games and the ones that have it are online. That's nice and all but some people want to use co-op games locally.

Those are just thoughts I have had lately, and I would also like to say great work with the magazine and keep it up.

Mohammad Saif Khan, via email

Who knows what could be in store? Sony recently filed a trademark for 'P.S. Thanks'. The trademark specifically protects

'P.S. Thanks' against "entertainment services" for an "incentive rewards program geared toward quantifying, identifying and motivating top consumer base with the goal of promotion and sale of video game hardware and software." Could be interesting. We're sure we'll find out what this means soon.

We must say, however, you can't

DLC - it's never been the case and it isn't the case now. You must buy Microsoft Points with real money to buy DLC. Microsoft Points and Achievement Points are different things. We don't know who told you otherwise but let them know they're full of a certain stinky substance.

Achievements Points to buy

use Xbox 360



THE PlayStation. CROSSWORD!

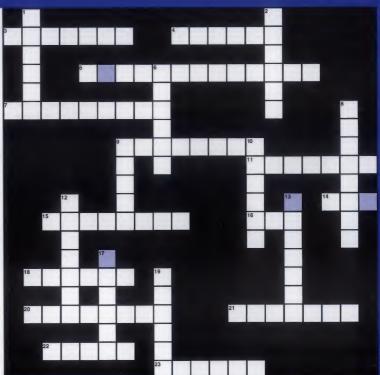
TEST YOUR BRAIN TO WIN A GAME! How to enter: Use the letters from the coloured squares and re-arrange them to form the name of a videogame character. Send your answers to OPS@derwenthoward.com.au with OPS Crossword as the subject. Entries close October 6

- Jean-Luc Cougar was a secret agent in Koei's Operation
- Burn ___ Burn (6)
- The latest SOCOM (13) 5
- One of the stages in Dante's Inferno (9)
- PS3 game where you could change the landscape by shooting it (8)
- Capcom light-gun game where you could hunt prehistoric beasts, Dino (7)
- Your character in the PSP game Pursuit Force, The ____ (3)
- Final Fantasy VII spinoff, Dirge of ____ (8)
- Infection, Mutation and Outbreak are all part of this RPG series, _ Hack (3)
- THQ's NFS challenger (6)
- This professional played Jacques Blanc in Onimusha 3 (4.4)
- The female hired killer in Max Payne (4,3)

- 22. Voice of Nathan Drake and Desmond Miles, Nolan ___ (5)
- 23. Called Ryu ga Gotoku in Japan: ___ (6)

DOWN

- Batman fighting game based on the TV series, RIse of ____ (3,3)
- A city in Assassin's Creed II (6)
- French-born character 6. with no arms (6)
- The city that Skate is set in, San ___ (8) Heroine of Golden Axe:
- Beast Rider, Tyris ____ (5)
- Most powerful car in GT2. Suzuki (6)
- The protagonist in Stranglehold (7)
- The voice of Burnout Paradise, DJ ___ (7)
- 17. Iron Man developer, Level (6)
- Ancient fighting game from Hudsonsoft, _ Roar (6)



DRAGONITE 16, DAIKATANA 18, BLAGONGA

Last month's anawers Across 1, Sexyuntsu 3, Haze 7, Venom 8, Breeball-Furies 5, Germans 6, Fuffy 9, Zenimax 10, Man 11, Brooklyn 12, Thirdechelon 15, Eurimax 10, Man 11, Brooklyn 12, Thirdechelon 15, Thirdechel

THE OPS **DUIZ THING**

Our imaginatively titled quiz will sort out the wheat from the chaff. Prove your worth with these brainbusters!



- 1. What two types of animal is a Prinny based on and what's so special about its pouch?
- 2. Which two real-life creatures is Daxter comprised of?
- 3. In which game series can you find a group of aggressive bipeds called Roger, Gon, Kuma?
- 4. Put the pig to the person









ANIMAL SPECIAL

6. In what game can you kill a Hypnocatrice, Lavasioth and Nargacuga?







7. Which of these does not belong?







- **8.** Wipeout 2097 had a special cheat where your ship could transform into four animals. What were they?
- 9. What animal was used on a tech-demo disc on the very first PlayStation?
- 10. What do these TV shows have in common: Angel, Friends and Family Guy? Hint: it's about collecting fruit.
- **11.** Which animal is related to the human, and why?













THEIR GAMES THE HOUNDS TO













Bandicoot (B) with Nathan Drake (1) from Uncharted (Naughty Dog) 12. A) Dead to Rights B) A Dog's Life (C) The Orange Box (Half-Life 2) D) Fallout 3 E) Okami F) Resident Evil Pig: (1) Tombi, (B) Pig Cops: (3) Duke Mukem 5. Donkey, Pigeon, Sheep, Mole, Skunk, Cow, Buffalo 6. Monster Huntler Freedom Unite 7. (C) Ty the Taranarian Tiger. He's not actually a tiger. 8. Bee, snall, pig, shark 9. Trex 10. Creah Bandiccot cameos 11. Sly Paccoon (A) with Cole (3) from inframous (Sucker Punchi), Baichel (C) with Nathran Hale (2) from Pessatance (Insommiac), Creah ANSWERS 1. They're penguins with bat wings, but they're actually hardened criminals. Their pouch is a 4th dimensional space S. Otter and wessel 3. Tekken 4. (A) Pey'j: (2) Jade, (C) Evil Komma

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THIS MONTH...

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FUEL FOR THOUGHT

t's been eight years since ex-con Dominic Toretto (Diesel) drove across the Mexican border, committing himself to a fugitive existence. Now, holed up in a beach shack in the Dominican Republic, and living on the run with the sole remnant of his past, Letty (Rodriguez), he tries to piece together a new life. But when the tragic death of someone he loves brings him back to LA, Dom reignites his feud with agent Brian O'Connor (Walker). As they are forced to confront a shared enemy, a sociopathic drug kingpin who is flooding the US with lethal product, Dom and Brian must give in to an uncertain new trust if they hope to out manoeuvre their enemy and avenge the tragedy that has bought them together once again.

Special Features include:

- Watch Vin Diesel take control of the viewing experience.
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- Virtual Car Garage create cars with your buddies!
- Feature Commentary with Director Justin Lin

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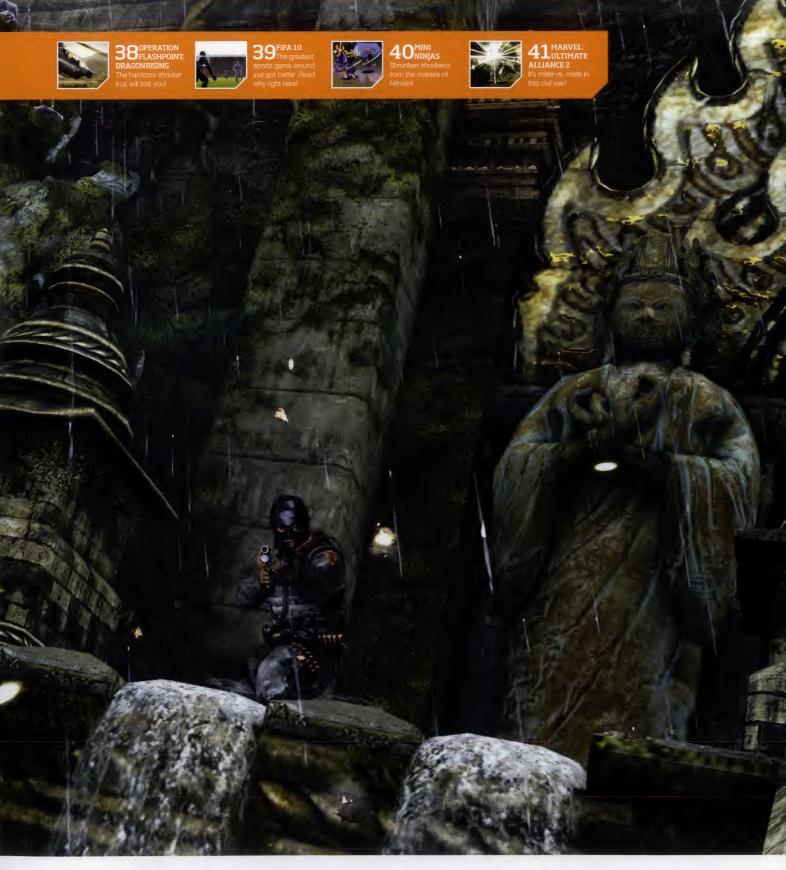
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PS3 GENRE: ACTION | RELEASE: OCTOBER 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: SONY | DEVELOPER: NAUGHTY DOG

UNCHARTED 2: AMONG THIEVES

Fortune and glory, kid



e're making a case for Nathan Drake to be the face of PlayStation. If we were charge over there at Sony HQ it'd be the second thing we'd do, marginally behind buying a fleet of Ferraris (because, presumably, we'd be rich). Sony hasn't ever really had a long-term mascot to call its own. Lara Croft and Crash Bandicoot both began appearing on other consoles years ago. Even Solid Snake has strayed – although he wasn't born on the PlayStation to begin with. There are a few that could raise their hands for the job, but they'd all be found wanting. Except Drake.

Drake is the perfect mascot. Everyone roots for the charming rogue. He's Indiana Jones, John McClane and Brad Pitt from that movie

where Angelina Jolie is trying to kill him, all rolled into one.

Best of all, he's human. A proper human, we mean. Microsoft has the Master Chief, but he's really just a tall mutant in a big green suit. He's the star of Microsoft's most bankable series, but you just can't market a masked spaceman to everyone. Same goes for Mario. He's been flying the Nintendo flag forever, but he'll never get any less dorky. They tried to make him human once. Ask Bob Hoskins how that worked out.

No, Drake has something for everyone. It's why *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune* was one of those rare games that are as fun to watch as they are to play. It supported an audience

like very few single-player games do, and we imagine the sequel will be no different. We asked Neil Druckmann, co-lead game designer on *Uncharted 2: Among Thieves*, about this phenomenon.

"The deliberate part for us is just telling a really engaging story, having characters – really rounded characters – that people can relate to and they like, and then pacing, says Druckmann. "Pacing has been very important to us in *Uncharted* and definitely *Uncharted* 2, so just by getting all those things right you're creating a very cinematic feel, and I don't mean just camera angles and things like that – you're constantly just waiting to see what's coming around the corner.





"We've heard all these stories of guys playing the game and their girlfriends or wives watching it, and kinda bugging them and nudging them saying, 'Come on, come on, when are you gonna play again? I wanna see what happens!' – and that's always fun for us to hear."

Good games don't happen by accident, and they don't happen easy either, so what's the single biggest challenge Naughty Dog faced making *Uncharted 2*?

"The single biggest challenge?" asks
Druckmann. "Definitely just not going the easy
route and, you know, making *Uncharted 1.5*.
From the get-go we decided to really challenge
ourselves and just push everything from the
graphics engine to the way the Al behaved,
giving Drake brand new moves, and on top of
that, you know, throw in our competitive and
cooperative online modes as well.

"So, just going throughout the project and never straying from that, you know, we're going to push ourselves and really kind of blow the doors open with this game."

It's this multiplayer supports that's proving to be one of the key differences between *Uncharted* the former and Naughty Dog's new big stick. How tough has this multiplayer aspect been to implement, seeing as though multiplayer isn't really something ND had dabbled much in before?

"Well, we did a little bit on PlayStation 2, you know, *Jak X* was online – so we have some experience with that," says Druckmann. "But it was a definitely a big undertaking for us.

"But we said if we were gonna do it we

were gonna do it right. We have a ton of maps, over 10 different kinds of gameplay modes just for the competitive end. We have these online cooperative maps, so yeah, it's been a lot of work, but we hired brand new designers, background artists and programmers just to handle our multiplayer aspect, to make sure the single-player never suffered."

And the award for most awkward handshake goes to

Druckmann mentioned pacing earlier, and it's something we wanted to touch on again. There's been a lot of discourse recently about game length, particularly from younger gamers. We get quite a few letters on the topic monthly, from angry readers filling the time between all the short games they keep buying. It's an interesting discussion. Still, does it bug developers when people gravitate towards simply arguing that games are too short,

especially since – just a few generations ago – games used to last a couple of hours if you were lucky?

"I wouldn't say 'bug', but I think every game should speak for itself, says Druckmann. "We definitely want to feel players get the bang for their buck – you know, they're gonna drop down however many Australian dollars you guys drop over there, over here it's 60 bucks. We want them to feel satisfied with the experience, but at the same time we don't want anyone to say, 'Oh, the game was too long, the pacing was bad.' We'd rather err on the fun, sort of rollercoaster side.

"Having said that, *Uncharted 2* is longer than the first game, and we're, like I said, putting in these online modes and a ton of unlockables – we want to make sure people

Uncharted 2: Among Thieves





just keep coming back to this game over and over, and just creating that kind of atmosphere and storytelling and big cinematic moments so people want to play through even the single-player more than once."

So have there been any other titles that have come out since *Uncharted* was released that have resonated with the guys over at Naughty Dog? Has there been anything in another game they've looked at and said, "Yeah, let's do something like that!" or similar?

"We've definitely played a lot of multiplayer games recently and a lot of shooters," says Druckmann. "Loved *Modern Warfare*, the first one – looking forward to the second one. *Gears* 2. Resident Evil 5...

"We looked at Killzone a lot, and actually talked with those guys about some of their rendering techniques so that really helped us push some of the graphical stuff we're doing in Uncharted 2. Then we looked at Resistance 2 and their co-op mode and how they did some of the stuff. Those were the big games we played."

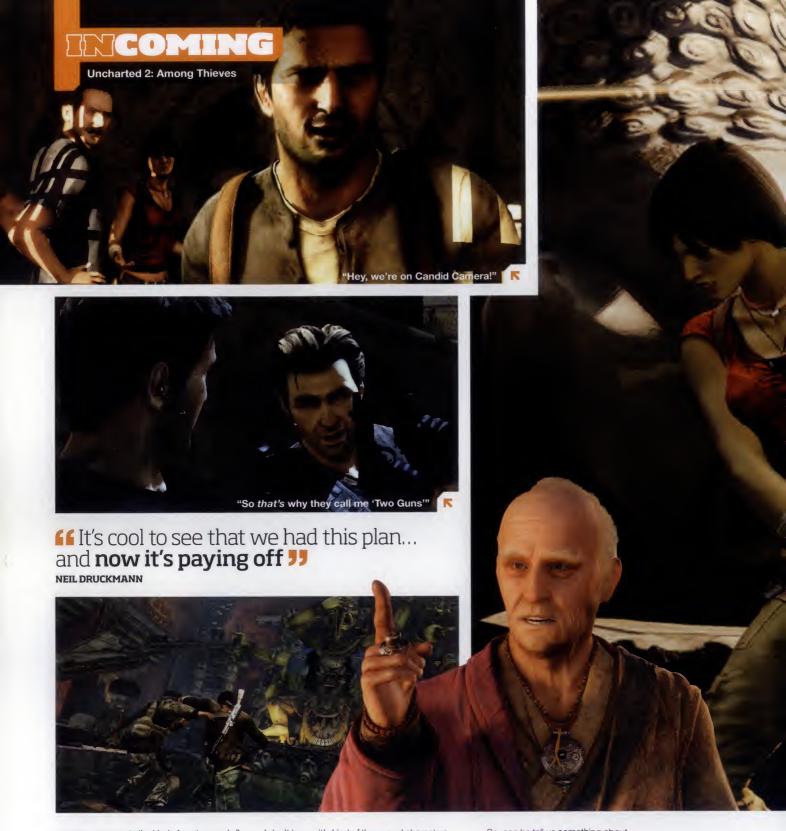
Naughty Dog is the quiet achiever of gaming. Name a game the studio has released since the first *Crash Bandicoot* that wasn't bloody awesome. You can't. And yet they don't act like other celebrity developers around the world. If you want cock waggling, for instance, you'd go to Epic. If you want a bunch of – let's face it – self-indulgent oddness, you look towards Kojima. Why is the culture at Naughty Dog different? What is it about the studio that gives it that consistent quality?

"I think it's the people we hire; we hire really high-calibre people, says Druckmann. "If you come here you'll see that there's nobody with the title 'Producer' that works in-house, we just hire people that know how to self-manage themselves and are really at the top of their game, know what they're doing and we push each other along.

"We try to keep the structure very flat so there isn't a lot of bureaucracy. People in any department are allowed to come and criticise other departments. For example, from the design end, if I'm making a level that's not fun, I'm gonna hear about it from the animators, the programmers, from everybody. Likewise, if I see, let's say, an animation I don't think looks good I'm gonna go and bug those people as well. So we really try to create a culture where we have open criticism and that really lets us push the boundaries of what we can do."

We mention to him that ND has recently announced that *Uncharted 2* doesn't need a mandatory install, but the game looks compromise-free. Yet there are still developers out there who still moan that, "We can't do this", "We can't do that, it's too hard" – what does he have to say about that?

"Well, I mean, we have some of the best programmers in the industry, so obviously not



everyone can create the kind of engine we do," says Druckmann. "Also, in-house here, I don't know if you've heard but we have The Ice Team, which is a bunch of programmers from Naughty Dog that actually make tools for other developers to help them come to grasp with the PS3.

"The one thing that bugs me personally is when people say, 'Oh, it's not possible on the PS3.' I think we're definitely coming out there and showing what the PS3 can do, and even where we can go from here."

The topic turns to some of *Uncharted 2*'s new faces. This new girl, Chloe, we hear she's Australian, we say. Crash Bandicoot, also Australian. Is this a coincidence?

"Oh, don't forget Harry Flynn, Drake's partner at the beginning of the game, also Australian," adds Druckmann.

"What is it with all these shady people coming out of Australia?" he continues. "Yeah,

I don't know, it's kind of these cool characters, and that's just where they happen to come from.

"Actually, some of the characters change depending on who we cast – for example, Chloe and Flynn, we didn't know they were going to be Australian. Well, we kinda guessed it, but if we'd have cast somebody from a different background we would have changed their character."

Actually, speaking of voice actors, do you the guys at ND get as surprised as us every time they hear Nolan North in another game? That guy's everywhere!

"He's pretty good," says Druckmann.
"No, not surprised, he usually gives us a good heads-up before we hear him in some game, or some movie – it was definitely cool to hear him in Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. He's just good, so he's in demand, so we don't have a problem with that."

So, can he tell us something about *Uncharted 2* that nobody else knows? Yes, he can.

"Let's see," says Druckmann. "I don't think we've announced this but if you played *Uncharted* and you got some medals, we're gonna give you some cash towards unlockables in *Uncharted 2*, so don't delete your save game."

Okay. But he's not done.

"Also we're gonna have this machinima mode where you can just kinda drop into this jungle gym and you can spawn any one of our characters, do all these cool acts, or move around, and actually film your character in front of an in-game green screen, so you can superimpose in whatever you want," he says.

"Also, when you talk over the microphone you'll see their lips moving, so it's really going to give people the ability to create their own



movies with our characters."

It's quite the titbit. If this works, and we've really got no reason to assume it won't, expect to see all manner of user-created short flicks using Uncharted 2's purpose built moviemaker. This is the kind of stuff that pierces deep. Get this right and the internet will make Uncharted 2 immortal.

So what about Druckmann himself? We ask what his favourite part of Uncharted 2 is. "My favourite part?" he asks. "I can't really talk about it because I don't want to spoil it, but I will say there's this bit with Tenzin, this guy that kind of guides you through the ice cave.

"There's this whole section from when you get to this Nepalese village going to this ice cave, and then when you go forward there's this really subtle kind of relationship we're trying to build between Drake and Tenzin. Tenzin doesn't speak any English, so the guys both

have to improvise, and through gameplay we really tried to build this relationship between these two characters. Only recently with the level design, with the voice acting, with the graphics, with the music, everything is coming together and it's starting to pay off. We've had these focus tests where people say, 'Yeah that was my favourite character, I really related to him'. It's cool to see that we had this plan and we stuck along with it and now it's paying off."

"He ain't heavy, he's -" BLAM! "my bru-therr-er"

Speaking of paying off, we've got a preorder to sink more cash into. & Luke Reilly

WE SAY

- ♠ Unmatched production values
- ♠ Looks even better
- ◆ We think Sully might cop

OPS IS. Observing approvingly







PS should never become military leaders. That's the lesson this realistic shooter taught us on our third restart when we tried to blow up a radar array. If it wasn't the enemy with the noisy but alarmingly accurate machine gun it was our own impatience to storm in to battle, or accidental philosophy of 'leave every man behind', whether they were mildly wounded or fatally clipped. It's our own fault. We should've realised what the tempo of the game would be when we discovered there are three distinct ways to crouch and move through the fields. Battlefield: Bad Company, this ain't.

Everything you do must have a plan: run and gun isn't an option unless you want to be forced back to the nearest checkpoint. Your team rely

on you for guidance in battle, though they still have the sense to shoot back when under fire. The instructions you do give are reminiscent of SOCOM's as your avatar barks back to the squad. These orders are quite detailed with options to flank, fall back, attack and more, and the military jargon spouted for running to locations or 'neutralising' an enemy sounds authentic, if a little robotic. The Al's reaction to being shot is similarly stilted, as though the sound files for each curse were recorded separately rather than flowing. Even the heat of battle allows even the most hardened soldier some reaction, surely.

Our adventure to the radar and afterwards to the enemy camp meant we had to direct the team via coordinates on the map and fumbling through the menu system to send them on their way. First thought was to send them in as bait. It was tactically stupid. While it drew out a few enemy soldiers that we sniped, one by one the symbols representing our team went from yellow (wounded) to red (dead).

The next time around we found out we could call in a naval barrage, so we sat back on the hillside and watched as shells shook the ground. The noise and visual feedback it created was incredible; as the screen shook a

Trophy congratulating us for calling in 'heavy rain' chimed over the barrage of high explosives as they slowly pounded the earth.

We wonder if Codemasters' timing is a little off, releasing a shooter only a month before the sequel to Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare hits the shelves. Of course, despite sharing a modern military theme and being shooters, Flashpoint and Modern Warfare are radically different: the latter prompts you where to go, what to do, and is a linear rollercoaster ride with astounding atmosphere. The former is far more technical with you as the driving force and offers far more freedom to achieve your goals. It's going to have to work hard to be noticed on the shelves next to Infinity Ward's next opus. Paul Taylor



- Awesome sound
- ↑ Tactically deep
- Unintuitive controls

OPS IS...
Going to bootcamp







FIFA is now so successful that the brand is now officially sponsoring Swindon Town Football Club, a pommy mob who currently play in England's Coca-Cola League 1. Sure that's a couple down from the Premier League, but at least it's something. You won't see bloody Seabass and his Pro Evolution mob with their brand's name on jersey's any time soon. Come on, Seabass! Prove us wrong. Can you tell we're starting to miss the old FIFA-PES

SPONSORED BY FIFA

"Piggy-back rides for everyone!"

PSS GENRE: SPORT | RELEASE: TBA 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: EA | DEVELOPER: EA CANADA

FIFA 10

All hail the lord of balls

n general, balls are awesome things, but they reached new heights while being savaged into nets by the meat-eating boots of FIFA 09. Not one to let its balls go droopy, EA Canada has rededicated itself to football perfection with FIFA 10 and refocused on what matters most – the relationship between ball and man.

If we had to use a wanky word to sum up our initial impressions of our preview build of FIFA 10, it'd be organic. Thanks to the new 360° movement, play on and around the ball feels far more intuitive, more natural. Players can slip and slide between leadfooted defenders while playing the ball off one foot, and jostling for possession is far more convincing than it was in last year's game. A forward's phenomenal speed, say, now allows them to keep defenders at bay for that extra moment longer. They're small but deep improvements.

Apart from that, EA Canada has taken to the gameplay blanket with a piping hot iron. The excessive vulnerability involved right after trapping a ball – gone. The nasty camera angle when defending in Be A Pro – changed. And then there are the additions. Fast free kicks are in while the Al has had its fair share of Weet Bix.

In fact we were astounded at just how astute the Al can be. Defensively, in particular, they mark tight and smart. The CPU is constantly sweating out silicon droplets as it revaluates the best places to shuffle for an intercept. Meanwhile thanks to the Al's ability to position itself wisely and better defend their back third, pushing through brain-numbing thru-balls is no longer a guaranteed ticket to score. Goals have to be earned.

Like a saucy piece of football girlfriend fluff, the new set plays are also worthy to behold. Integrated into the game's returning practice mode, it allows players to pick a quadrant in their attacking third then program the movements of each of their players with a few simple commands. After syncing up everyone's movements, the play can be tested, saved, and mapped to one of the pad's directions for easy use during the glorious 90 minutes

Kudos to EA Canada. Deep in its bunker, perhaps packed with Maradonna fisting balls into nets, Zidane head butting walls, and the Italian team writhing on the ground on contact with mosquitos, they've set themselves up to bring us the best representation of the world game seen. And yet again to boot. Sorry.

James Ellis

Football perfection? It's close
 Content galore
 Not a huge leap

OPS IS...
Dancing for Joy

"Wait, stop! Don't touch it!"

EXCOMING

Mini Ninjas





Kung fu panda impersonator

IO INTERACTIVE

INFO BYTE

The same dudes who did Kane & Lynch are developing this? Talk about your chalk and cheesel

NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS SEPTEMBER

Who dat ninia:

our initial reaction, upon viewing Mini Ninjas, might be, "Aren't I a little too old to be playing something of this calibre?" You may even find yourself jumping the gun and dismissing this title as something in the "strictly for kids" category, filed under "looks like a Wii game" and marked "far too cutesy for us tough as nails men and women of the gaming community". The reality is that Mini Ninjas walks the line, hovering somewhere between cartoony third-person, open-ish world, shuriken shenanigans and something that your little brother or sister would be more at home playing.

The plot is the usual claptrap of overwhelming forces of evil gathering against those that walk the righteous path, and with your ranks thinning as the conflict ensues, it's down to you, Hiro, to become the hero (sorry) your master so desperately needs. The art

direction leans towards the minimalist end of the spectrum, adopting a strictly functional, less-is-more philosophy, and this tone is carried out throughout every aspect of Mini Ninjas, almost like a mission statement.

As you travel the land as Hiro, you have companions with specialised abilities you can easily access and switch into. Of the three we played, Hiro can use his spirit to take over animals and use them to attack enemies. and your somewhat larger compadre, Futo, is a manly, lumbering beast that packs a mean punch, and can be used to take on your more burly adversaries. We round out our trio with Suzume, who's subtle use of her flute lullabies enemies to sleep allowing her to scoot past undetected. You can switch between them at any point on the fly, which should lead to diversity and a fair amount of replayability.

You'll also master some pretty decent ninja skills, like locating temples to unlock new spells, fire shuriken for a ranged attack, get your flame on with some targeted fireballs

or lay waste to whole groups of ronin with a lightning storm. As far as boss battles go, it's old school all the way. Recognise the pattern, find the

> weakness, and exploit. with most playing out like the God of War mini-games - albeit a more simplified version, anyway.

There's always a risk trying to capture an "all ages" audience, if it's too juvenile, you'll alienate



NINJA, NINJA RAF One thing severely lacking in the gaming/

ninjitsu arena has been the good ol' Yankee Doodle Dandy version of the star-tossing, katana-wielding, smoke-bomb poppin', sneaky-sneaky, light-stepping warriors of the night. We've had enough of the 'classic' Japanese-styled Tenchu, Raiden or Shinobi. How about letting loose a little something something infused with a taste of the stars and stripes, ala Remo Williams, unarmed and dangerous - or the original American Ninja, Michael Dudikoff? Let's get ridiculous! Oh, and the two dudes from the G.I. Joe game don't count.

your older gamers; make it too difficult, and kids will shy away from it. Not without its charm, experienced gamers will barely break a sweat from what we've seen so far. We look forward to seeing if our next looksee bears more challenging fruit. 🕹 Dave Kozicki

WE SAY

- Chop and change characters
- Diverse moves
- Repetitive, too kiddle?

OPS IS Rolling the dice



MANAGE



PS3 GENRE: ACTION | RELEASE: SEPTEMBER | DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION | DEVELOPER: VICARIOUS VISIONS

MARVEL: ULTIMATE ALLIANCE 2

With our powers combined...

here's something gratifying about picking off a foe with a laser-like unibeam. It's cooler, though, when you and your friend with the alarming claws double-team, shooting your beam towards his blades and take out the goon and his posse in a blast of refracted energy. You deserve to give your teammate a high five when you pull it off, and this feature that Activision have labelled 'fusion' is probably the most significant addition compared to MUA.

Fans of the original will be familiar with the formula: loads of dungeon-style crawling with waves of chumps to smack around, followed by a boss fight. This time you should anticipate more environmental destruction and, of course, show-boating fusion powers to add to the *Alliance* repertoire.

'Fusion' isn't limited to two specific characters; with an extended roster of 20-odd heroes and villains (including faces that should've been in there the first time, like Hulk and Juggernaut), 'wouldn't it be cool if' opportunities are plentiful and tantalising,

Executing the fusion in single player is a matter of pressing a shoulder button and a corresponding button for each character in your group to initiate the attack. In multi – the way this game ought to be played – both you and your best-suited team-mate must figure out when to flex your superpowers. It's another way that team-work is promoted over the super-ego of a superhero; give your enemy a one-two by turning them to pulp with the Hulk while Iron Man rains attacks from above.

Melee attacks only go so far in sending clods on their way, and the ability to lob cars is reserved for meatier protagonists; as manly as he is, Captain America just doesn't have the grunt needed to pick up a sedan and turn it into a missile. This defect shouldn't be surprising; your characters are only human. Should they decide a nap on the ground is easier than whaling on opponents, team mates can come to the rescue and resuscitate. If you're lacking the requisite number of human players to make a party of four, that spare Al character can be

STAN
THE MAN
Stan Lee's cameos in the Marvel
films are purely for show: his
'character' hasn't affected the plot
of one of the films. Expect him to be
involved more with MUA 2, as Lee

lends his likeness and voice to a character that is an integral part of the storyline.

Stay tuned

swapped on the fly with your own if you figure the computercontrolled Spider-Man could be put to better use.

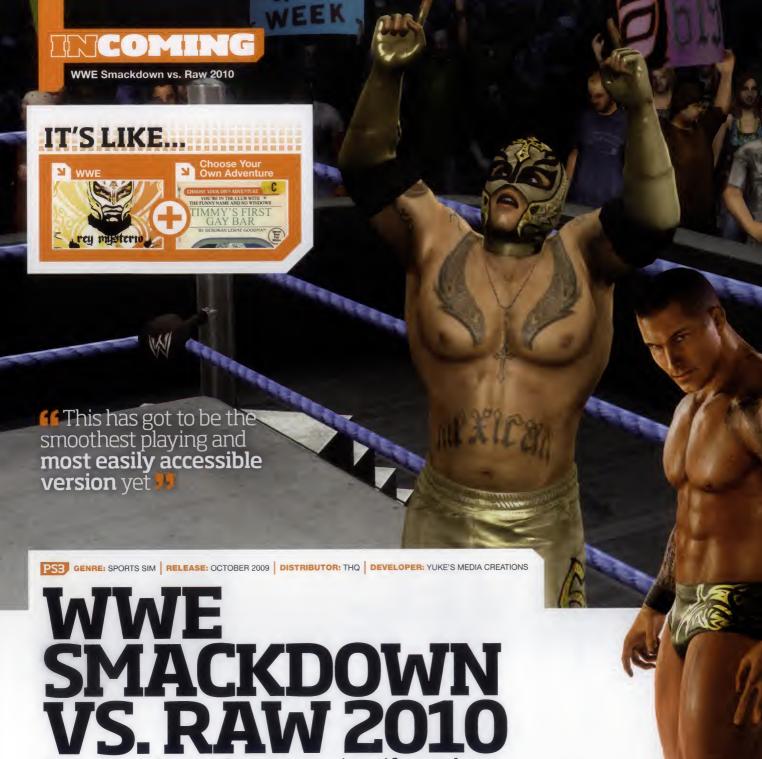
We're cautiously optimistic about *MUA2*. Our hands-on time showed great promise, and we're looking forward to exploiting the dearth of combinations the fusion system allows. Still, the original *Alliance* remains as one our favourite co-op games and we hope there's more new tricks that'll keep comic nerds, players and comic-nerd gamers happy. Paul Taylor

WE SAY

- ♠ Switching characters mid-fight
- Fusion powers
- Could be repetitive

OPS IS... Looking for a disguise





Step up and in to the square ring, if you dare

ser generated content. That, along with "verticality", "destructible environments" and "cel-shaded" are buzzwords that the industry uses to get journalists juices flowing about the next big thing in video games. The sad fact is that most of the time, it's only mere lip service, or has a crutch that almost renders the process moot.

Look at LittleBigPlanet, or more the point, the balls-up with the user content. Many games enthusiasts were chomping at the bit to get some original levels or knock out a homage to iconic movies and characters until Sony stepped in and put the kibosh on it, weeding out the latter and somewhat spaying and neutering the whole thing.

What does this have to do with WWE Smackdown vs. Raw 2010, you ask? A lot. You see, THQ has created some kind of monstrous hybrid from its titles, meshing the look and feel of UFC Undisputed coupled with the ridiculous depth of the character customisation system from Saint's Row 2 to help you create your own bonafide wrestler, complete with an up to 10 year history, signature moves and the ability to upload it online and show it off to the world. Lofty goals indeed. What's scarier is, it looks like it might just payoff.

To be frank, we got more than a little overwhelmed with the myriad customisation options available. Not only can you get intricate with body shapes, sex, hair, face structure, you can add tattoos, piercings and access licensed clothing for the very first time. Then take a look at the way your wrestler enters the ring. The blow-by-blow breakdown of the fanfare is impressive. You can pick the way they hit centre stage, what's playing on the jumbo-tron in the background, how they move down the ramp, the way they enter the ring, the camera angles for each section, the lighting... If you want fireworks, choose exactly when you trigger them, down to the second. it's so intricate it's absolutely astounding, and that's just the tip of the iceberg.

You can take all the above features and

flesh out your wrestler's back story in an incredible amount of detail, running up to 10 years back, with any number of scripted events and characters for him/her to go up against. It's like having your very own malleable version of the WWE. You can work out the camera, even tailor the emotion of the crowd to your liking and have branching story arcs for your wrestler depending on a win or a loss, and how much time you've got on your hands to invest in crafting the plot. It's like a Choose Your Own Adventure story; with the only limit your time, imagination and dedication.

This has got to be the smoothest playing and most easily accessible version yet, and is surprisingly similar to UFC Undisputed (maybe not SO surprising since Yuke's developed







BRINGING

WWE is taking care of the ladies (and those of us who'd rather look at the ladies) by introducing playable Divas into the roster, and you can use them in your character creation sessions. We can't speak for the rest of you, but as much as we love watching Cena, The Undertaker, Ray Mysterio and Triple H knock the living snot out of each other, we get an equal (perhaps more?) amount of enjoyment watching some nicely toned mamas (like Gail Kim above) going toe to toe. Who's with us?

both titles). The wrestler character models are spot on, and probably the most lifelike we've seen. After the grandiose entrances and fanfare you get amongst it. Gone are the health bars and other such nonsense cluttering up the screen, with just a solitary ring laid down at your wrestler's feet. This is your momentum bar, and once it's maxed out, you'll be able to use Signature moves and Finishers as prompted by quick time events. In fact, the gameplay is littered with such events, like prompt to hit 12 for a reversal, or when to pin, or break submission holds. It's extremely smooth and plays out like a simplified version of UFC Undisputed with your right thumbstick controlling all things submissiony (it's a word, look it up). Within no time, you'll be tossing opponents into the rope, smashing faces into turnbuckles and high flying off the top rope with devastating effect, and that's just the way we like it

We've gotta admit, we're more than a tad impressed with this latest offering from one of most popular sporting franchises around. The US fan base is huge, obsessive, and extremely vocal about what they want to see in the latest version of title. Yuke's has monitored the feedback and crafted a substantially interactive experience, which not only harnesses the fist to face action, but also delves across into the soap opera drama/comedy as well, to sate even the most discerning WWE fan's appetite. Do you smell what 2010 is cooking? We do. Kinds smells like victory. - Dave Kozicki

WE SAY

- Sweet graphics
- Intuitive controls
- Deep creation modes

OPS IS Ready to lay the smack down





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REE (DONE DIRT CHEAP)

Producer Sébastien Puel and creative director Patrice Desilets talk *Assassin's Creed II,* how killing is their business, and why business is good...

OPS: What are the specific technologies you developed for Assassin's Creed II? Are there any particular achievements you're

PD: What I'm particularly proud of is the new game architecture allowing much more diverse gameplay and missions in our engine. We also have enhanced NPC navigation showcasing parkour-like acrobatics that will spice up the chases and escape missions in the garr

Now, for the visuals, the Assassin's Creed game engine - Arivil - got some awesome new technical features that let us create a world with an even better visual treatment

We have many new technicalities we added in the engine that affect the graphics in the game and improve the overall visual treatment: night and day cycle, new load distance for more detailed open-world environment from greater distances, the same internal vegetation technology used in Far Cry 2, several rendering improvements to support improved lighting, reflection and more special effects, new cloth system used

extensively for characters Beyond the technical achievements, the very location we chose poised us to make a visually outstanding game. Cities like Florence and Venice are amongst the most stunning landscapes in the world and all the technology we developed just served this purpose, made you feel this beauty. We are not only recreating the architecture but also everything that makes Italy so unique during the 15th Century - from the special lighting of Venice to the colourful carnival disguises. Every minor detail was important for the artists and they are very excited for players to get their hands on the game and explore such a stunning city

OPS: How is Assassin's Creed linked with Assassin's Creed II?

SP: Assassin's Creed II is the sequel to Assassin's Creed. The events in the present start right where the first game left off but the Animus will plunge you into a very different and fresh historical period. Overall we are building on the strengths on the first episode, its unique sense of freedom and immersion and adding a lot more depth, variety and scope to the core gameplay. Storywise, Ezio

is a descendant of Altair and the connection

between the two games will be revealed through an encoded book very much like the one Leonardo Da Vinci is famous for writing.

Once again, Desmond will be exploring his DNA to relive an ancestor's life, however this time it with a very different goal and it's a very different kind of ancestor. Ezio Auditore very different kind of ancestor. Ezlo Auditore Da Firenze; a nobleman who fived at the end of the 15th Century in Italy is our new hero his family is betrayed and murdered by the ruling families of Italy, and Ezio must uncover the arts of his ancestors in order to avenge their death. To his allies, he will become a force for change – fighting for freedom and justice. To his enemies, he will become a bodgey man – dedicated to the destruction of the tyrants of Italy. Through Ezlo's quest for vengeance. Desmond and the present day Assassins will uncover the crucial piece of the conspiracy that was ninted at in the first Assassin's Greed game. The Templan' Abstergo plot is bigger than could have been magined with consequences reaching to every detail of modern life as we know it.

OPS: The entire game play/mission structure in Assassin's Creed was semi-linear and kept the same structure through the nine assassinations, Will Assassin's Creed II teature more missions

assassin's Creed it reature more mission and a wider variety in the structure and how the story unfolds?

SP: The game structure and the mission system were the most crucial elements we wanted to improve on. We are redefining the overall mission structure to give gamers. a more fun, rewarding and unpredictable experience throughout the game by adding a lot of variety in missions types and changing the way the story and the missions unfold. There are no more patterns of missions to perform but rather a story that develops through a great amount of mission giving characters. Some characters will give you an assassination mission, others an escort/ protect mission while some will give you a chase mission, et cetera. There is no limit to the types of challenges we will give players. We invested most of our development time in ensuring that there is a huge amount of

variety and depth in the missions required to finish the story. But we also want the player to have a real freedom and opportunity to to have a real freedom and opportunity to explore and use the world we have created at their own pace. Cities are now filled with a ton of missions that the player can do if she chooses for instance, you can now decide to get rid of witnesses if you real you are becoming too notorious after a not-so-stealthy assassination, or help thieves pursued by guards. These tasks are optional but will bring you interesting rewards if you accept to fulfil them.

OPS: Crowd interaction was one of the big promises of Assassin's Creed. How will you improve the crowd interaction for the second game and the role of the NPCs? SP: In Assassin's Creed II, you have been betrayed by the ruling families of Italy - you will have to learn how to interact and use the common people' or, like we call them in the game, 'the underworld', to get your revenge So you can generally consider that the crowd is on your side - except, of course, if you behave too badly! First, any crowd NPC can help you to hide - just go into a group and press the blend button to enter a crowd and lower your chances of being noticed by guards. The crowd can help you to walk through the city unnoticed but isn't 100 per cent detection proof as some classes of guards actively search you out even in hiding spots.

We have also added a new 'notoriety system'. Your actions in the city will impact your notoriety, break the law one too many times and you will become 'wanted' in the









OPS: Tell us more about this favour system.

OPS: Can you tell us more about the new notoriety system?

SP: The notoriety system monitors your actions. The more commotion you cause in the city, such as killing innocents, the more notorious you become: people will become more aware of your actions and the authorities will search for you. If you are notorious, you have a much higher chance of being seen by patrolling guards even if you're trying to blend your way through. There are various ways to decrease your level of notoriety and return to an anonymous state; assassinate witnesses, bribe a herald, get rid of warrant posters with your face on them.

Every minor detail was important for the artists and they are very excited PATRICE DESILETS

OPS: What is the significance behind the name of Ezio?

SP: Ezio is derived from the word Aietos (Old Greek) and Aetius (Latin) and means "eagle". The name Ezio was popularised in Italy based on the historical hero Flavius Aëtius – a 5th Century Roman general who defeated Attila the Hun at the Battle of Chalons.

The choice of the name Ezio follows the tradition of naming our hero based of the eagle icon. Ezio like Altair will track his target, circle waiting for the right moment, and then strike with a single killing blow.

Ezio's and Altair's outlits were inspired by the eagle as well. For example, their hood was designed like the beak of an eagle.

ops: Can you give us more details regarding the economic system?

SP: The economic system is a totally new feature in Assassin's Creed II that adds a lot of depth to the overall gameplay. As a player, you will be able to collect and use the in-game currency to enhance your gameplay experience.

Income will come in many different ways. You can gain money by completing some missions or find treasures that are scattered in the city. The crowd is also a good resource; you can now pickpocket anyone in the crowd. However Ezio will have to be careful as he is not the only one who pickpockets and can be caught red-handed. The assassin will also have the ability to strip/loot soldiers of their wealth once they have been battered and weakened.

Gaining money allows the assassin to make the most of the tools at his disposal. Throwing daggers, smoke bombs and other resources specifically tailored to the Assassins can be purchased in the game's various shops. Also, as Leonardo helps you decode the codex written by Altair, he will discover sketches to build special weapon upgrades.

Ezio has many friends in the city and in exchange for money, members of the main factions – thief, courtesan and mercenary – can be hired to help him elude, distract or even defeat his enemies. For the right price, members of the three factions will help Ezio. This is what we call the 'favour system'.

OPS: Tell us more about this favour system. SP: You can also use certain groups or fractions to perform specific actions. There are three main factions in the game; the thieves, the courtesans and the mercenaries. Through the game, you will meet their leaders, for example, Antonio, the cunning thief leader who will ask you to do certain missions for him. Once you gain Antonio's trust, the members of the thief guild will be fully operational to help you perform specific tasks. For example, the courtesans will be able to go seduce and distract groups of guards letting Ezio sneak past them unnoticed. Using factions and their unique special abilities adds a whole layer of strategy to the game.

OPS: Can you reveal to us more about Ezio's new hidden blade upgrades?
SP: Leonardo Da Vinci is the man behind the various hidden blade upgrades you'll discover. One of those last stage upgrades is the hidden gun blade that you see at the end of the E3 trailer. The hidden gun lets you load one bullet at a time so players will have to strategically choose when they want to use it. Players will be able to buy bullets at various shops.

Another upgrade is the double blade which gives Ezio a secondary blade on his left arm. And there are many others...

Additionally, Ezio will get to upgrade his assassin outfit with various armour parts.

OPS: Can you elaborate on that?

PD: At E3, you've learned that there is an economic system that lets the assassin collect money through various ways and make the most of the tools at his disposal. Weapons, tools, ammo, faction service, and doctors



will be available for our assassin to spend his hard-earned money. There is still much to reveal to what players can do with their mone In Assassin's Creed II, there will be an

In Assassin's Creed II, there will be an armour upgrade system where Ezio will be able to upgrade various armour parts: shoulders, chest, boots, etcetera. There will be different armour ranks and each of them will offer better protection as well as a new look to Ezio. Also, there will be tailors in Assassin's Creed II that will be able to customize the colour of Ezio's outfit.

OPS: What can you tell us about other locations?

SP: The countryside will play more of a central gameplay role in Assassin's Creed II. There will be smaller cities in the countryside with specific missions and stories for Ezio to engage in. I'lf let you guess what they can be. In Assassin's Creed, we had one big kingdom but this time we have various regions in the countryside and each of those regions has its own look and feel. For instance, you'll get to visit the famous Tuscany region, known for its beautiful and fertile fields. It's a real treat for the eyes and will give a lot of variety to our game both in terms of visuals and gameplay.

PD: Ezio is a young noble born from the city of Florence. He will live the beginning of his life in the city that is considered the birthplace of the Italian Renaissance. His family is well respected by the Florentine society. Florence is known for having some of the most beautiful churches and monuments to come out of the Renaissance. The most prestigious and dominant building in Florence is Santa Maria del Fiore, also known as The

Duomo. There are many other landmarks that players will want to discover. Santa Croce. Palazzo Vecchio, Ponte Vecchio, Santa Maria. Novella etc. The first sequence of the game will be set in Florence and players will get to meet Ezio's family, friends and his enemies. As the game progresses, Ezio will have to

As the game progresses, Ezio will have to travel to various cities and regions. There is of course, Venice, as you have discovered in the E3 demo, and this is just a small portion of the world of Assassin's Creed II. Players will discover the famous Tuscany as the town of San Gimignano. Beside Tuscany and San Gimignano, there are the mountain regions that players will have to go through on their first journey to Venice.

Another region players will get to discover is the wetlands, situated to the west of Florence. This region is known for its continuous flood, cloudy weather and its various aquatic plants. Players will get to explore and perform various missions in the city of Forli, deep within the Wetlands.

It was important for us that each city, regions and sub city have an important role in the game. We didn't want the countryside to be a simple walk in the park for the players. They will all have their role in the game and will require players to invest time in them. Each region will have its main, secondary missions. There will be lots of exploration and time investment for the player to discover all the secrets behind each location.

Ezio can control a horse carriage in the Italian countryside to reach his destination faster and escort people alongside it.
Guards will try to jump aboard the carriage...
This is one of the surprises we have in store for the player.

Our hero is **able to keep** his five fingers, thanks to... Leonardo Da Vinci

SÉBASTIEN PUEL

OPS: Did you do any research to help you design the new setting?

SP: The core team members went to Italy and visited each city assisted by a guide who explained the story behind each building, street and corner of the environment. We also took a lot of pictures of the buildings from that time to use as references for the game. So early 2008, right after our visit to Italy, we started to build our first sections of Venice. Our art team is doing an amazing job of recreating the 15th Century Italy. Mohamed Gambouz, our art director, is working closely with the world and characters team so that they paint an accurate picture for the gamers. The main challenge is really to recreate the cities as they would have looked in the 15th Century. This requires lots of research. For example, there is little information on how the Rialto Bridge in Venice looked like in the 15th Century since it burnt down around the time our game is set. The only thing we knew is that it was made of wood. Therefore, we designed the bridge based on what it looks like today but in wood.

OPS: We've noticed Ezio has all his five fingers compared to Altair who only had four due to the Assassin's brotherhood initiation. How do you explain that?

SP: Back in the Middle Ages, cutting fingers off was part of the initiation process to become an Assassin and be accepted in the brotherhood. In Assassin's Creed II, 300 years later, customs and technologies are changing and our hero is able to keep his five fingers, thanks to the genius inventions of Leonardo Da Vinci.

OPS: Who guides you to be historically and architecturally accurate when recreating cities like Venice or events like the Pazzi conspiracy?

SP: We are lucky to have an architect, witha master's degree in history and theory of architecture on the team. She does all the historical researches on architecture, political events and social aspects of the game. We are in contact with Margaret Meserve, assistant professor of History at University of Notre Dame, who is reviewing the script and giving us advice on what we can and can't do for the scenario of the game to be as accurate as possible.

OPS: How about connectivity between the PS3 and the PSP versions?

SP: Definitely! As players unlock health and Hidden blade upgrades in Assassin's Creed II, the same upgrades will be unlocked in Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines. It also works the other way round: on the PS3 you will be able to access any Templar Coins and special weapons you've collected on the PSP.



Words: Anthony O'Connor

FUBAR

It stands for F--ked Up Beyond All Recognition and is an apt, albeit sailorish, way to describe some of the games we've had to review over the years. We were curious, so we put on our hats and left the office to investigate this phenomenon. You can send our Walkley Award to the address on the inside cover







t *OPS* we get a lot of mileage out of giving bad games crap. How many times can we rag on *Lair*? A lot, apparently. That game in particular is an example of extremely high potential resulting in an extremely poor product.

The thing is, we're like you. Oh sure, we're better looking and smell less like old ham, but it's not like we want games to be bad.

Bad games = unhappy gamers. On a purely mercenary level unhappy gamers means fewer game magazines.

It's not like we have other jobs we can do. We've committed to a life of sitting in front of big screens for hundreds of hours, tweaking knobs and mashing buttons, then trying to describe the experience in human words.

This IS our day job!

So to bridge the gap somewhat 'twixt creator and cretin, we've done some asking around, investigated some of the stinky potatoes that have been dropped and found out some of the reasons why games go average, bad or downright FUBAR.

PLEASE NOTE: The interviews we conducted were with real people, some of them currently working for the very companies they're talking about. To that end, we've kept our sources secret. So what makes games FUBAR?

NO IDEA

MR. ED currently works for a company that is going to release a game. They think. One day. Now games take a long time to make in the normal scheme of things, but MR. ED has some specific theories on why his company in particular is dog paddling rather than swimming:

"The creator has to know what he or she wants. Ours does not. You need a strong concept straight out of the gate and without

The creator has to know what he or she wants.

Ours does not

MR. ED

that the problems just trickle down to every other part of the process."

MR. ED's company continues to work on their product. When asked for an educated guess at a release date he just snorted and ate some hay. Actually he just shrugged, but Mr. Ed rules. A talking horse. Genius idea! Speaking of genius ideas we have...

LOADS OF IDEAS... ALL BAD

Bob-the-Kelpie is able to be a little more frank as he no longer works for the company he's describing - mainly because it doesn't exist anymore.

"I was a writer for a now bankrupt company called Brilliant Interactive Ideas aka: BII." Bob told us. "They had a bunch of pretty sweet licenses like Superman and Xena and

some kiddie horror novels. There was a lot of talent there but the problem was with the product itself. On a fundamental level it was just a bad idea – but Bloody Idiotic Ideas is a terrible name for a company.

"You know those 'Choose Your Own Adventure' novels you read when

The worst PS3 games available according to www.metacritic.com (rating out of 100) - Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust 19 Vampire Rain: Altered Species 30 Mobile Suit Gundam:

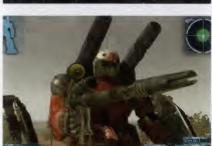














you were a kid? It was like that. Except they called them 'Interactive Movies'. Now a real interactive movie would be one where you could fight Darth Vader or make sweaty sex with the hot chick. These just played different animations. It was like watching really long cut scenes for a game you never got to play. We'd have these surreal staff meetings where the staff would suggest all these improvements and the boss would nod and then... disagree with them all.

66 Be suspicious of games that come out around March **99**

"BRIAN"

"It was like watching the Titanic hit the iceberg and get blown up by aliens at the same time. In slow motion. Despite having dozens of animators everything moved slowly so when they finally saw release they looked dated and silly."

So the "Interactive Movies" were released? "Yes. Minimally. I saw one I wrote, actually, in a bargain bin in a video shop. A chick picked it up. Looked at it and put it back. It retailed for \$4.95 and she put it back. Brilliant Ideas indeed."

THE GOLDEN RULE (HE WHO HAS THE GOLD MAKES THE RULES)

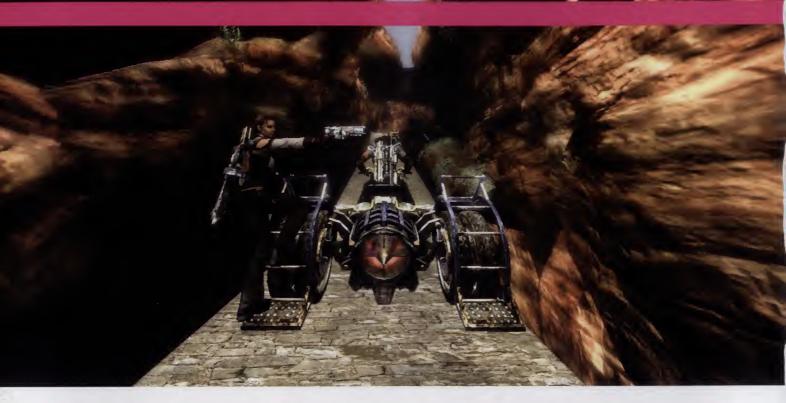
So just say you know what you want to make, you make it but you're not ready when the deadline rolls around. It happens to the best companies. Look at Rockstar Games: the delay with *GTA IV* and now *Red Dead Redemption*. These delays don't just affect gamers who have to wait another bloody six months, but won't someone think of the erm... shareholders?

We talked with "Brian" about a game he was involved with tangentially. It was one of those close-but-no-cigar FUBAR titles and he had a theory that was a lot less esoteric than many people we talked to.

"Look, it's a business. Your triple-A titles have got so much – money and a fan base >

INDEPTH

FUBAR









 behind them you forget the smaller companies have to conform to much stricter deadlines.

"Look, I can't say which game it was but be suspicious of games that come out around March."

Huh?

"it's the end of the European Financial Year. Unless you're with one of the big boys – and sometimes even then – the publisher can have a hard deadline and feel like they're taking a punt. A lot of people panic and release whatever they've got in whatever condition it's in. Even if it's not shaping up, tough: it's still going to market. The idea behind that being there's no further risk, no further expenditure and to the shareholders it appears the company has been smart and cut the losses. Then, of course, the reviews and sales figures start coming in... but that's another story.

"I'll leave you with this: if a game comes out around March, and it's looking a bit rough and you wonder, 'why the hell didn't they give that another month or so?' the finger shouldn't always be pointed at the creators."

ff How the hell are you supposed to talk up something you don't know about?

"DAVE"

PUBLICALLY RELATE, PRIVATELY BERATE

With an idea turned into product and released onto a potentially hostile market – after surviving script changes, budget cuts, companies being bought out and hard deadlines – the penultimate step is the game being shown to the gaming press. A former PR man for now defunct Australian distributor Red-Ant, "Dave", shed some light on the pimping part of the process.

"What surprised me about a lot of the PR, especially at Red-Ant, was they weren't gamers! How the hell are you supposed to talk up something you don't know about?"

We asked him how do you make a shocker

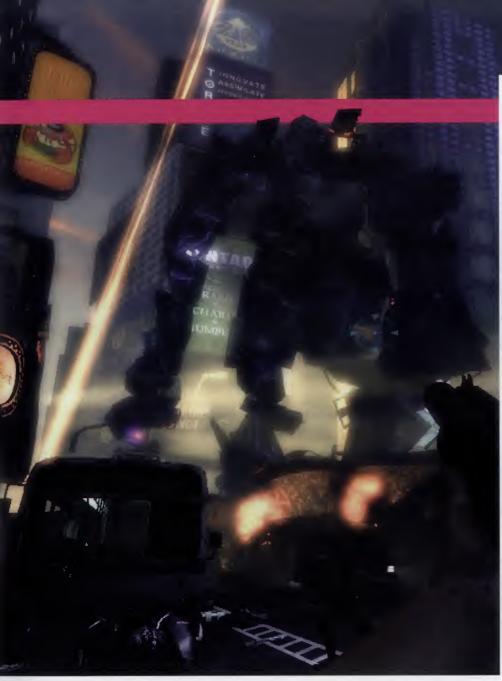
of a title sound good?

"There's a bunch of ways. If you're a gamer, and you're coming from a position of at least a bit of authority and knowledge, you can focus on certain things. Like 'the world is twice the size of *Oblivion*' or 'combat is really exciting' or 'it sold really well in Japan.' But to be honest one of the best techniques is, well, to be honest.

"I was a games journo prior to Red-Ant and I'm one again now, so you can tell when someone's feeding you bullshit. The phrase 'niche market' was always a good one. I tried to be as honest as I could. I'd play the games and give my real opinion. But there's a perception out there that games live or die or the back of good or bad reviews and that's simply not true. One of our biggest sellers was Armored Core 4 for the PS3 and that was not a game that reviewed well. It just had a large fan base."

We wanted to know that now he was out of the PR hype machine, was there any tricks used that he would, could and should share.

"If the game is getting a release in the next















week or fortnight and you've hardly seen any code at all at the mag? It's probably going to suck. But that's no secret, people on both sides of the industry know that. Same with press embargoes. They hardly ever work but some companies insist on using them. I always tried to be as honest as possible. Because if a game journo has lowered expectations they're more likely to score more even-handedly. Having said that I always thought Stranglehold got a raw deal with sixes and sevens. That game was a solid eight and that's me talking as a gamer not a PR drone.

"There are a lot of games that people expect to be pretty average and consequently they often just get burnt out in time for deadline. Movie tie-ins, sequels in series that should have been put out to pasture ages ago and comic book games would usually suck. That's starting to change now, slowly, but way back when you expected a movie tie-in to be terrible it frequently was."

IN CONCLUSION...

The relationship between an industry and a specialty magazine, or website for that

matter, is an interesting one. It's no big secret, after all, that commercial magazines need advertisements. That's business. They also, however, need honest editorial. You'll read glowing reviews in OPS, and you'll read damning ones. Publishers take the good with the bad because, realistically, duds happen.

After talking to these industry insiders, and indeed many we simply don't have room for, it's a bloody marvel that any games are good at all. There appears to be so much that can go wrong along the way to derail the best intentions. It almost always involves money.

So while we exist in a world where fantastic games like inFamous and MGS4 exist, spare a thought for the Lairs of the world. Because they didn't set out to make a bad game. They weren't sitting around a hologram-filled table with specs on how to make the dragons look crappy, the textures flicker or the controls clunky. They were trying to make an awesome dragon combat game.

While we won't stop sticking the boot into games that have it coming - and there are always going to be games that have it coming we do so now with a more educated boot. -





Jesse Abney, producer of *Need for Speed SHIFT*, talks cars, crashes and plans for Holden and Ford. This is the new shift...

OPS: Tell us the reason behind producing a sim racing game.

JA: The franchise is nearly 15 years old, and our fan base has really grown up with us, and then looking into their interests and passions, and over the last two years we found that a fairly large group of them, their interests had been shifting along with the rest of the of the automotive industry into more serious, more authentic racing games. By trying to do just one title a year, every year, we really weren't catering to the broad interests of the racing genre, and that really falls, for Need For Speed anyway, across three separate sub genres of action, arcade and simulation. By

establishing a rapport with our fan base we began to realise that their interests, a large percentage of their interests, were very specific to one of those three sub-genres. And so we announced last year that we would diversify the franchise, focus down on design and developers that help us hit those sub-genres with a high quality mark and allow us more than a year turn around time between design and development of each version. What we have locked and loaded in the pipe when we made that announcement are three unique Need For Speeds. On the Wii, we have EA Montreal, who's an established Wii developer, doing the Nitro game, very arcade, very specific

to that platform, meanwhile we had Slightly Mad Studios bringing us our next generation racing game in *SHIFT*, and highlighting their brand new simulation racing engine, and *World Online* was announced as our PC online-only title, which satisfied the action open-world, massively multiplayer segment.

SHIFT very much represents our authentic racing game, while it's built upon a real world force physics simulator in the Slightly Mad Studios engine, it is more an authentic racing game; it more harnesses the tenets of Need For Speed and brings a fun, pick up and play, fast paced and innovative game to the simulation racing space.

OPS: Considering other racing games that have come out over the last few years, the influence they must've had, it sounds like you're trying to do a lot like what Codemasters did with its title *GRID*, with the aspect of simulation and drifting. Did *GRID* have an influence on *SHIFT*?

JA: Yeah, both GRID and DiRT are considered the high benchmarks marks of their segment. They're accessible to all styles of players; they're not so hardcore at one end of the spectrum like Gran Turismo and Forza are. We understand that Need For Speed doesn't really compete in that space, but SHIFT does compete squarely with what Codies did with GRID and DiRT. We play those games, we love 'em, they've done a lot of stuff right, we've seen them start to tap in to some very



Words: Paul Taylor



Innovative areas that we think SHIFT is pushing ahead in even further. And so, lots of respect to Codies, the work they've done, and just teaching us a lesson in innovation on next generation consoles, really paving the road for us to innovate further in a number of ways that Slighty Mad Studios is doing with SHIFT.

OPS: One of the things that really impressed us at E3 was the sound of SHIFT. For instance, backing off the throttle would create a real burble. Can you tell us a bit about the process of making these sounds?

JA: Dr. Stephen Baysted at Slightly Mad Studios, he's a physics, sound and audio engineer professor. He starts with the source; not only dynometer captures of real world engines, naturally aspirated, turbo charge et cetera, but capturing cars on the track. Having dyno time gives a number of elements, but also having cars on the track, rigged with very expensive audio recording devices, allows us to captures the raw source of surface types, the gravel types, the backfires, the engines and

[SHIFT] brings a fun, pick up and play, fast paced and innovative game to the simulation racing space];



all of the nuanced sounds that are layered into the SHIFT sound engine. All that quality effect starts with the source. It's really hard to fake it; you either have it or you don't. By having multiple layers in the source, by having a car on the track we have the ability to layer in all those real world elements in to the sound engine. The camera position in the game [is also important, as] you'll note that the audio inside the cockpit is very different from the audio effect of the camera view outside the car. There's also the fact of collisions, and the collisions in SHIFT are modelled on metal-on-metal and some of the process that the guys at Slightly Mad Studios took were actually raising cars on cranes and smashing them together.

Another cool anecdote that Stephen tells is on one occasion is when they had one of their race cars rigged with audio equipment, it actually crashed - thankfully no one was hurt - and what they got out of that was a tremendous real world library of effects: the

reality of a car colliding with a wall and coming apart in pieces. A number of those elements are in *SHIFT*. The collisions, the tyres on the surfaces, on track, off track sound effects as well as the car-to-car impacts taken from those actual elements.

OPS: We know the BMW M3 GT2 is the hero car, what are the other cars that will be available?

JA: We have an interest in keeping a lot of mainstay vehicles in Need For Speed, we're always working with manufacturers to release brand new models; the GT2 class BMW is an example of that. We've never had something quite that serious in SHIFT and it just goes towards the authenticity of that style of racing game that we're presenting this year.

It's much more in line with the WTCC and LMS series, and so what we have is a number of cars in the prototype range, a number of cars in the LMS range, and a number of not-









yet-seen cars that are traditional for Need For Speed to release in their games, yearly. The Porsche RSR, Audi R8 LMS, Maseratti MC12, Zonda F, brand new never before seen on the street never mind in a videogame, so these very serious, very exotic, true-to-life cars are making a debut in SHIFT.

OPS: What are you most proud of in SHIFT? JA: The stuff we've been talking about to date with the true driver experience, the cockpit cam, the real innovative way Slightly Mad Studios and Patrick [Söderlund] have crafted the experience of being behind the wheel of these cars is some of the most innovative aspects of the game. It's the visual and visceral intensity of taming these 700-plus horsepower beasts on the track that's really played up in SHIFT from the cockpit cam. It's the Al having human fallibility traits while you're in a race; they're prone to make mistakes in the same manner that you might and even though you're not involved in some of the instances on the track they are happening rather organically.

I feel that all of those things playing in concert is what draws you into the action and keeps it exciting, keeps it new and fresh from event to event. And that True Driver's Experience, that's a whole laundry list of effects we've crafted over a year-and-a-half of design and development to what it feels like to be a race car driver handling these cars at the edge of control, and even with the all-new crash dynamic, what does it look like to a race car driver when he loses control. Our intense crash audio; for the first time you hear the driver's heartbeat and [his] breathing when things become very intense, and all of that is a tool for immersion, really drawing the player in further.

That only goes so far, though, then you have the third dimension of that which is the Al, which again is just organically evolving on the track: as you're experiencing the race the Al is experiencing the race, and some pretty cool things are gonna happen the more and more you play.

OPS: This is the first time that you and Slightly Mad Studios have teamed up. What have they brought to the development of SHIFT?

development of SHIFT?

JA: A number of things. They're a triple-A simulation race-car developer, GT, GT Legends, GT 2 are all critically acclaimed PC

simulation racing games. These guys have a huge passion for the genre and for automotive motor sports. Being in the heart of Europe in England, they're well integrated in to the [race car] culture. They don't just sit behind desks; they have a deep understanding both through

...these very serious, very exotic, true-to-life cars are making a debut in SHIFT!

their cultural ties to automotive motorsport as well as their participation. Many of these guys have [spent] hundreds of hours on the track; they have race cars, they have a passion and an interest for the industry and so all that translates pretty well in their past games. Through our committee and our announcement to find the right developer to the right design for Need For Speed, [well landed on Slighty Mad Sludios. It was just a natural pairing of the right passion with the right project.



FORD-ING AHEAD AND HOLDEN ON

Need For Speed has undergone dramatic drangeover the last 15 years from high-performance cars to fear-cylinder buzz boxes, Ferrens to Holdens and Fords. We asked Jesse Abney straight: What about Australian cars? For a couple of years we had a grenar with Holdens and Fords but they've disappeared.

Will we see them again?

"It ebbs and flows, man! While we'd like to please everybody there's only so much we can get done in a year. We do have a commitment to post-launch

development where our licensing team continues to work with manufacturers to get approvals, our modelling team continues to work with assets to build game-ready models and the audio that gress along with them and the physics too. We now have a commitment to continue to work on throughout the year. There's always an opportunity that things will make a reappearance in games like SHIFT. It'd be door to see trucks like Holden ules in there as well (laughs) and, y'know, anything's possible, that's what I'll say,"





SHIFT that no one else knows?

JA: (laughs) Boy, I'd have to think on that for a minute! We've been gradually rolling out lots of news, and more over, man, what I can say is kinda tied by our PR guys

OPS: Or is there a cool little Easter egg?

JA: What I can say is some of the coolest stuff is our commitment to our post launch development. Without giving away exact details, plans for DLC are very progressive

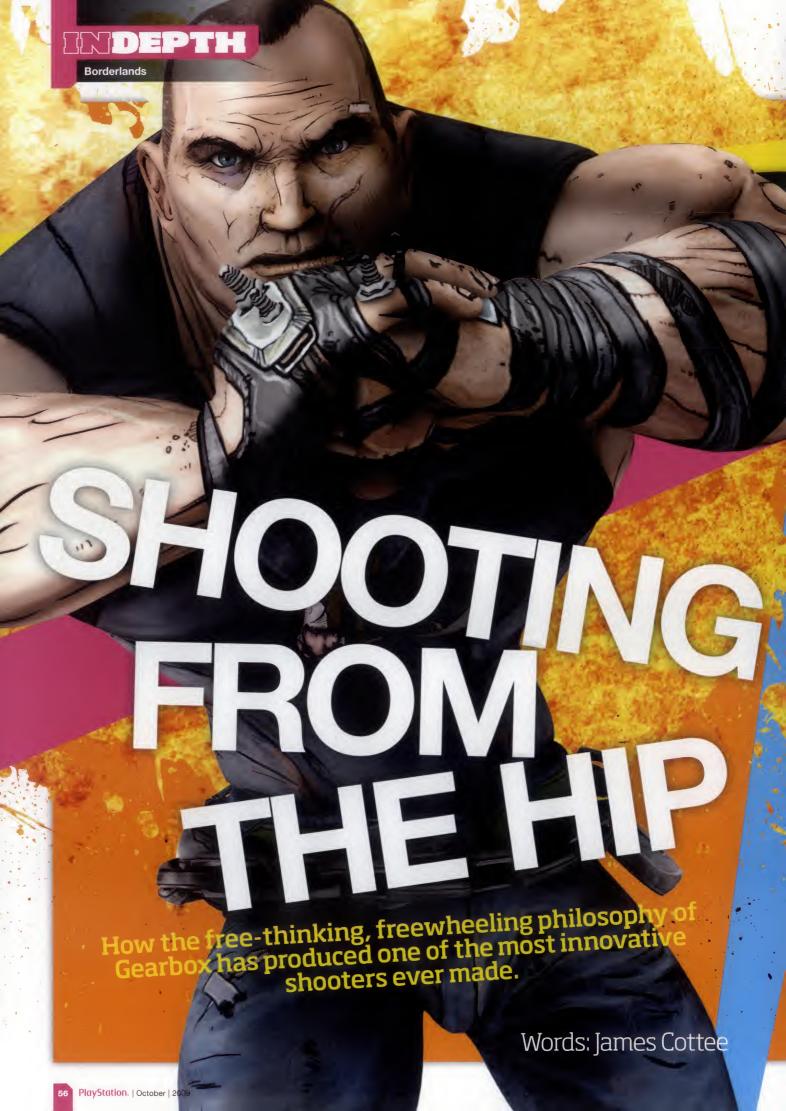
with SHIFT. We saw with Need For Speed Undercover several steps taken to release upgraded content upgraded game modes and a number of add-ons for Undercover as a naif-step towards our post launch commitment. What SHIFT is representing is going to be the next step keeping the life of the product fresh far or long after ship. So, DLC plans – which I've just designed a blue-print or – are some pretty damn cool features and owners. This spans not only game modes but verticles, as well as community tools, and

generation engine we have a lot more ability to develop out modular interfaces for community tools like replay tools, continually add on killer WTCC and LMS styled exotic cars and continue to roll out newly crafted game modes for not only the career but certainly the online multiplayer space. So what you guys are going shipping mid September it's going to have life











realistic graphical style of their upcoming shooter *Borderlands*. The screens from E3

badder *Borderlands* lay in an enlightened management style: hiring the best possible

As Vice President Steve Gibson told us, the cel-shading revamp got started a

Convincing the boss was one thing. Convincing the investors was another

"The promise of the game was gigantic. You had the level designers and the coders back at our original concept, and the ideas that we had, we're not really fully seeing those

look fantastic, right. And then, somewhere through the process, when it gets to the

"So, they were like, 'This is happening to our game! We don't want that!' We had all this just getting distilled down to the generic sci-fi fantasy merc. So they decided: 'We're going

you do, you don't do it for free. All of those man-hours were costing Gearbox money.

president of Gearbox, chimed in:

"I didn't even know! It was an insurgency!"

want to crush their souls, right?"
Randy let out some evil chuckles at this

the top FUN. Now we can actually do that, and not worry about — 'Does this look right in

fusion of shooter and RPG, we turned to

could do it. And it's a pretty good bet. To help explain the appeal of RPG had icons. So the skill to play the game was the same skill that you used to launch the

This sword swings faster, but that one does more damage. So there's a lot of choice.



deep into the environment and finding interesting weapons, better weapons. There's

your capabilities grow.
"So even though there's no skill from a there's a lot of growth, and choice, and discovery. There's a lot of compelling stuff there. It almost becomes a compulsion. It hooked me, and it hooked a lot of people.

incredibly deep in some respects, yet shallow in others. The leading FPS on 360, Randy skill progression.
"The Master Chief at the end of Halo

'aaaghh, cool,' and I blew the guy up. I love that. I've been making those kinds of games



Getting gunned down doesn't necessarily mean long march back from the re-spawn point – you still get a chance to 'Fight For Your Life'. When this message flashes up in huge letters, you'll have a set time to kill just one more enemy. Succeed and your 'Second Wind' kicks in.



Can we take a shooter and can we layer in the compulsion of *Ďiablo* – of loot, of quests, of discovery, of choice, of skills and character development...Can we laver that stuff on top of Halo? **And can we make it fun?** That was the bet

RANDY PITCHFORD

all that, there's no dice roll that decides 'did he hit or not?'"

like, 'Okay... clearly I'm using the wrong tool for the job here.' Or maybe: 'I'm not prepared a squishy spot, and it says CRITICAL and a huge amount of damage comes out, and it's

planet Pandora, the game started to sound eerily familiar to a certain PSP smash-hit. that the creatures have weaknesses, and sometimes in their animations or behaviors

So we asked, point blank: Had he played Monster Hunter?



"The design decision when you're building a shooter is, we need to build a and you're always down to: 'How do we make our shotgun good?'"

them that in an ideal world, you'd have more than one shotgun. You'd have stacks of them

of the game. So why not give people those choices? But, then the challenge is, clearly, we cannot design 100 rocket launchers, 100 shotguns, or anything like that."

Al that can make this happen for us. So what we did was we created this Al system called Gearbuilder. It takes all these different shotgun possibilities, and throws them into a mixture, and it gives us out all the possibilities."

grown it, and realised just how crazy and amazing we can make it." They stopped

we see something new every single time."

But wait – there's more. This technology

have giant Spider Ants with different attack modes, when they'll roll up into a ball and on them, jumping effects... all the possibilities that these guys can combine." Even scripted

another key feature thrown in because the designers felt like it.

concept art of him hanging around the office. He had nothing to do with the game. He was just so cool, like, 'Hey, we gotta put him in there!'"
As the Claptrap trundles along, guiding

you around the hub town of Fyrestone, he chirps happily to himself, sounding exactly reference. "That's a new one!"

After our brief time with Borderlands

all their impulsive, last-minute choices were for the best. These iterative improvements

WETHACK 4 EVER
When the topic turned to old-school dungeon crawlers like
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Diablo and Rogue, Gearbox head Randy Pitchford firmly
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established his RPG street cred: "I've probably spent more
established his RPG street cred: "I've probably spent more
thing... ever.
ever.
"Probably. I dunno."





REVIEW

REVIEW RATING

GOLD AWARD

Incredible: Perfection is relative and elusive, and no game will ever be perfect. Our 10 doesn't mean a game is flawless, it means a game has done everything it set out to do in an amazing fashion and thus it deserves our highest possible praise.

PlayStation SILVER AWARD Excellent: An outstanding game, either limited by its scope, sequel status (and lack of improvement) or a few minor blemishes from being a 10.

Likely one of the very best in its genre, a 9 comes with high praise.

PlayStation BRONZE AWARD Great: Still well ahead of the pack in most departments, despite a few issues here and there. Thoroughly recommended.

Good: A robust package that does a solid job despite a bunch of moderate problems.

Enjoyable in parts, just not fantastic overall.

Decent: This game will have some noticeable flaws that may make it hard to recommend to those who aren't fans of the genre, but it will do more right than it does wrong. Just.

Mediocre. A conceded pass, if you know what we mean. Half okay, but half-busted. Might scrape by for fans, but few will want to play a game that half sucks

Poor: Anything below 5, strictly speaking, is a fail – but there are degrees of 'bad' just as there are degrees of 'good'. A 4 is unrefined, partially broken and poorly designed.

Wery disappointing: Things start to go very wrong here – fundamentally flaved in many ways, boring and close to pointless.

2 Terrible: Virtually nothing good here at all, and definitely not worth the effort of removing the wrapper.

The worst: Reserved for the very worst gaming could ever offer.
A broken, offensive mess without a single redeeming quality.

THIS ISSUE

Rocksteady has

followed up its work

on the thoroughly excellent but

underappreciated Urban Chaos: Riot

Response with total

aplomb BATMAN: ARKHAM ASYLUM

64 Batman:

Arkham Asylum

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We choose to review our games on a super-slick Full HD 1080p 40" Bravia X-series for the best picture possible. This sucker melts eyeballs:



Batman: Arkham Asylum

BATMANI: BAHAMASYLM

Same Bat time, Same Bat Channel

atman: the gravel-voiced, cowl-clad Dark Knight, has never really been given a decent game to call his own – certainly not on the PS3. Oh sure, he was a character in the halfway decent PS2 title, Justice League Heroes – and he'll pop up in movie tie-ins – but it's as if no one's seen the potential of the mighty bat.

The last halfway decent Bats game we remember playing is *Batman: The Movie* for the Commodore 64 and, in retrospect, it was probably shit.

We think the reason for Batman not spurting out little franchise winged babies like a uterus cannon (*LEGO Batman* notwithstanding) is that his stories tend to be a little darker than, say, Spider-Man or even Hulk: both of whom have had non-movie related games based on them.

An idea that seemed obvious was 'GTA: Gotham'. Bats hoons around in the Batmobile

choosing to fight muggers, crooks and super villains.

Great idea, but the project is huge with no guarantee it would work. And it didn't. Ask Pandemic Studios in Brisbane.

No, what a solid
Batman game needed
was a location that didn't
encompass all of Gotham, but
gave the title the slightly crime-

stinky odour of the Bats' universe.

What better place than Arkham Asylum?
Arkham Asylum is housed on the coast of
Gotham. It's not your average big house. Sure
there's the unwanted sex and toothbrushes
sharpened into shivs that we've come to
expect from modern correctional institutions,
but it also holds the worst of the worst.
Batman's most heinous villains.

The Joker? Yes sir.

Scarecrow? Right to your left.

Poison Ivy? Just follow the vines. The idea being that this extreme location, while relatively small, is full of funky characters, hidden bonuses and even a mini Bat Cave!

Batman: Arkham Asylum begins with an extremely pretty sequence where Batman drives the Batmobile at scrote-shrinkingly fast speeds through Gotham.

Joker bound and gagged, the clown prince of evil ready to be dropped back in the pokey so Batman can bugger off to brood atop a gargoyle or similar.

Of course Batman knows the Joker's as sly as a family of unusually sly foxes bound together with ockie straps and asked to enter the "Sly Quadruped Challenge 2009".

Very sly, in other words.

In fact, in between his gibbering it seems like The Joker let himself get taken to Arkham awfully easily...

...then BAM! The trap is sprung and the lunatics are running the asylum. The Joker and Harley Quinn (who looks sexy as hell) are

experimenting with the likes of Bane and the venom that makes him so, you know, Banelike. Plus Doctor Crane (aka The Scarecrow) is on the loose as well as some other big baddies we'll talk about in a little while.

The point is: you've fallen into a trap. A trap that's brimming with insane, tough thugs and have to stop whatever new nutty nefarious scheme of green hair's got cooked up.

So Bats finds himself armed with nothing but a grapple hook and a limitless supply of one throw batterangs (later on you can throw up to three at a time). He also has Detective Mode. A quick press of
and suddenly you're seeing through walls and objects you can pick many his highlighted.

Also, if you want to trail someone – say someone who smokes – you can take a sample of the tobacco and follow the trail it leaves. The most useful aspect of Detective Mode, however, is the X-ray vision. As you creep like a shadow in the dark from one room to the next, Detective mode will analyse the contents of the room. There could be five hostiles unarmed and two armed. Now we get to the bit of Batman that makes this such a kick arse title.

Leaving the gun-toting baddies aside for a

Leaving the gun-toting baddies aside for a second let's talk hand-to-hand combat. You know how in MGS4, and indeed a few of the others, CQC was a much touted and rarely used martial arts technique. Well, forget that because the punchy/kicky combat in Arkham Asylum is breathtaking. Say you're facing 10 thugs. They'll circle you. Now you can just start cracking skulls, but it's better to wait for









fight will give you upgrade points, finding Riddler trophies (over two hundred of which have been hidden around should be a snapping teeth around the place, beating bosses or making it to new areas – all will give you a chance to upgrade – but make sure you think about the choices. Play to your strengths.

scenes. To be honest we'd like to end the review there, but there are a few quibbles worth mentioning.

Despite giving the gamer multiple

Challenge Rooms, loads of unlockables including foes as collectible figurines, despite all the cool plot twists and chunky, toothcracking combat... it probably could've been a bit longer. You could finish the game in 10 hours (eight if you just dash from goal to goal) but even taking your sweet time it's not going to last you more than 15 hours. Not overly short by today's standards, but we couldn't help feeling like Arkham Asvlum didn't truly capitalise on its wonderfully unique location. There are a number of super villains you never lay eyes on, let alone a finger, for instance. Some will certainly see it it as somewhat of a missed opportunity, particularly considering the strength of Batman's rogue's gallery and the fact that we kind of expected to come across them inside Arkham Asylum. If you were going to put all Batman's baddies in one spot, this would've been the place to do it. To be fair to an otherwise fantastic title, we do have to review the game we're given, not the game we'd have liked it to have been.

Still, Batman: Arkham Asylum is one of the best games this year. Some of the boss fights are a bit clichéd but there's so much good stuff here it's impossible you'll have a bad time. Finally the Dark Knight gets a shit hot game. Now about that 'GTA: Gotham' idea...

Anthony O'Connor

16 This game has been **crafted** with obvious love and care... It's just so rich



getting upgrades.

You'll do this mainly by

performing tasks. Winning a



Batman: Arkham Asylum is easily, like really easily, the best Batman game in existence. The location, the clever puzzles, the amazing combat – seriously, sometimes the grimy locations you fight the thugs in look like moving airbrushed artwork from the likes of Steve Bisley.

Riddler's Riddles. He gives you a clue about

"reflecting", you find a mirror, scan it and solve

the riddle. Big upgrades. Also killing the Joker's

Combine that with a plot that actually makes sense and a genuine sense of mood and atmosphere. The sequence where you have to enter Killer Croc's lair is bloody terrifying. Sometimes it takes you a moment to work out you're hallucinating because of Scarecrow gas, so when things start getting weird... just go with it.

The game has been crafted with obvious love and care. Rocksteady has followed up its work on the thoroughly excellent but underappreciated Urban Chaos: Riot Response with total aplomb. It's just so rich. Not only do you get info about the foes you have, you can unlock bios for pretty much all of Batman's other enemies. Sometimes you can hear them interviewed by shrinks. Plus there's nice touches like finding Clayface's cell and he keeps changing form, asking you to let him out. Very cool. By about the three-quarter mark you'll have multiple batarangs, upgraded armour, a bat claw and a zip line - plus doors that appeared locked for most of the game can now be hacked. The level design is terrific, as well as the characters, animation and cut

THAT'S SUPER!

It's a good time for superhero games. The upcoming Marvel: Ultimate Alliance 2 – loosely based on the Civil War story line – is the one we reckon will be the next big winner.

FINAL SAY:



- The most authentic, dark and compelling Batman game ever
- The combat engine is a revelation - hand-to-hand hero beat downs

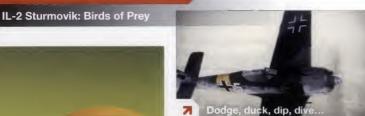


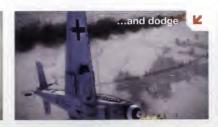
- There are too few big baddies and none of them are terribly satisfying to fight
- Quite simply it's just too short, even with the Challenge Rooms

VERDICT: Batman: Arkham Asylum really delivers the goods. An epic Bat story with some amazing Bat touches. Bat-tacular.













IL-2STURMOVIK: BIRDS OF PREY

On a wing and a prayer in the air up there

early 70 years on, the life of a World War II pilot seems deceptively simple. You spent a good deal of time in the air, giving Fritz what-for, shouting tally-ho and trying to avoid the chop. You spent the rest of time on the ground badgering mechanics to paint swastikas on your kite and scooting out to the nearest village to have sex with other people's wives. It's a completely unfair appraisal of RAF life, and one that we very likely just made up. Still, we always picture pilots as dashing sorts of blokes who, when they aren't murdering Nazis at 10,000 feet, aren't adverse to giving the fairer sex something to hang their

towels on. It makes sense that the exploits of these men have been adapted into videogame form for the last two decades, and we don't think it's ever been done better than it has in IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey.

Birds of Prey is all about scale, and that scale is large. Birds of Prey features six main theatres representing the main airborne stoushes of WWII; the Battle of Britain, Stalingrad, Sicily, Korsun, the Battle of the Bulge and the Battle of Berlin. Each of these mini campaigns is set on large and exceedingly details maps. Our favourite is probably the first, the English countryside around Dover. The ground is a green quilt of green pastures, patches of trees, rolling hills, country lanes, small villages, grass airstrips and makeshift military bases, all the way to the white cliffs - which drop away into the English Channel. It's spectacular, and it stands up to low-level inspection far better than any other flight game we've ever seen.

It plays well too. On the arcade setting the controls themselves don't take long to

master, which is nice. The left stick controls pitch and roll and the right thumbstick controls yaw and throttle. There's a cockpit view for the dedicated, some helpful target acquisition and aiming assistance for the less dedicated and plenty of goals to complete. One feature we particularly liked is the ability to continue after your main mission objectives are dusted in order to knock down a few more planes, or manually land back at base. It'd be nice if the 'victory music' didn't constantly loop at this point however.

Working in the unison with the overall above-average level of quality are the tiny details that really begin to add up and stop you in your tracks. The damage modelling, for instance, is enormously impressive. Enemy slugs and flak will rend gaping holes in your plane, some so large you can see straight through them. Control surfaces can be shot away and landing gear can collapse under rough landings. Mid-air collisions can and will shear off a wingtip, or an entire wing, and send you spinning towards the ground.



INFO

GENRE: FLIGHT RELEASE: NOW DISTRIBUTOR: AIE DEVELOPER: GAIJIN ENTERTAINMENT PLAYERS: 1-16 PRICE: \$99.95





the smoke, however, and your whole screen will quickly be smeared in sludge leaving you flying blind until it fades away. Smoking shell casings tumble from your trailing edges as you hammer down the trigger, and the sky is a wicked criss-cross of vapour trails and streaking bullets. The whole project has been executed with incredible flair and precision. It's a whale-sized effort from Moscow-based Gaijin Entertainment that's quite stunning whether you're a planespotter or not.

Problems?

The sheer amount of remarkable detail in each of the huge maps has come at a cost - because there aren't many of them. Fewer environments is a concession we'll happily accept in order for them to look as spectacular as they do, but we'd be lying if we said it didn't eventually get a little samey zipping over the same landscapes four or five missions in a row.

Likewise, there are fewer flyable planes than, say Blazing Angels - but the models in Birds of Prey are far more detailed. Again, still the right decision. Quality over quantity. Maybe a little cheap DLC could bolster the slightly spartan hangar though.

The more or less instant respawning takes away some of the urgency from the missions themselves - but you can shut them off, which makes things tenser. The fully-fledged

simulation mode is bewilderingly difficult and will see very little use, but its inclusion does mark Birds of Prey as a flight game for a very wide audience (from the very casual, to the very... lonely).

All in all, most of the other blanks in Birds of Prey's ammo belt are simply limitations inherent in the genre. Flight games really are simple shooting galleries, and thus they start to age somewhat quite quickly. Birds of Prey isn't immune from this, but it's also quite short. Multiplayer should help plenty here, and we're dying to check it out post-release, but we would've liked to have seen some kind of mission generator for more singleplayer yucks.

Also, ground bashing is always more boring than dogfighting in any flight game, and Birds of Prey is no exception. Shredding up gun batteries and ships is significantly less fun that tangling with airborne bandits, and the game doesn't do too much to convince you

Small criticisms aside, there really isn't a lot else Gailin could've done better here. IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey is easily the bestlooking flight game on PS3, and it's certainly the best playing. A fantastic sense of speed (especially in cockpit view at treetop height), intense and visceral aerial action, great sound and terrific attention to detail culminate in an extremely good game that's far less stuffy than you'd have ever expected. . Luke Reilly

FINAL SAY:



- Head-turning attention to detail · Fun and accessible sky-blasting



- Longevity will be an issue
- Unfriendly title at odds with how good the game is

VERDICT: Far and away the best flight game we've played - a huge surprise and thoroughly recommended.





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PLAYSTATION 3







COLINMCRAE: DIRT 2

The Dirtying...

gnore the implications that come with the name Colin McRae and his iconic Subaru Impreza rally car: *DiRT 2* is an extreme sports game. You just don't know it yet.

The game begins with a phone call from Travis Pastrana, welcoming you to the world of DiRT 2. He mentions the late Colin McRae and gives you his car, a No Fear branded Impreza, which he drove in the X Games and you're urged to "do the man proud". From there it's in to your trailer, the main hub, to fill out the requisite name and nationality form. It's from this point you quickly realise things are set to 'maximum gnarly extreme'. We were trying to pick a suitable nickname that we'd be known as through the game, and taking our time with it. Pastrana, however, insisted "C'mon dude, we got a party to go to!"

Presented on a map inside the trailer is the game's crux, the DiRT tour, a loose championship of events that can be tackled in any order you wish depending on your experience level and is represented on a map

of the world. Like *DiRT*, the sequel provides a variety of disciplines to race in, like Rally, Rallycross, Raid and with a few other events thrown in as a diversion. Gone completely from the series is an event in one country, as you'll be flying all over the globe to compete in races.

On your travels you'll meet X Games personalities, both fictitious and real. Ken Block, Tanner Foust and Pastrana feature heavily (all real), as does Katie Justice and Jayde Taylor (fictitious), and each will 'host' an event, either by themselves or with another extreme dude. As we chose a Malaysian Rally, Pastrana told us he's "heading to Malaysia for some hot jungle action." Pub-lease.

London's Battersea Rallycross is the first event on the Tour and browsing the roster of cars available yields some surprises. Sure, you can choose the totally capable No Fear Group N Impreza, or the STi Impreza, or the other Impreza on the same list, or even one of the two Mitsubishi Evos. Perhaps you'd like to hit the Rallycross with a Nissan 350Z? Or the

Pontiac Solstice? How's about the BMW Z4 M Coupe? Really? Truly. Gone are Citroens, Fiats, Fords and Skodas, cars with any sort of rallying cred. Each vehicle can be used in multiple types of events provided you buy a 'pack' to make them fit. It means that you can pick a car and keep using it, though considering there are roughly five or six cars that you'd seriously consider using off road, this isn't as restricting as it sounds

It's a hard game to take seriously as it truly promotes style over substance, which is a shame as the race experience is thoroughly exciting. Cars are beautifully modeled and come apart spectacularly if you clip them on a bit of scenery at high speed. Bonnets and bumpers are easily reefed off, crumbling and bending fences and walls dramatically. Engine noises and other sound effects are at the high level you'd expect, and Codemasters has done well to make driving loads of fun, refining the original's handling. Environments, too, are breathtaking to drive through and the difficulty

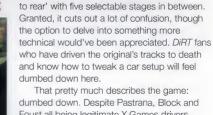












That pretty much describes the game: dumbed down. Despite Pastrana, Block and Foust all being legitimate X Games drivers, their credibility and instruction can't be taken seriously compared to someone like McRae. Their sound-bites before events, like "people here know how to party", don't add anything to the race. Ultimately, underneath the numetal tunes, radical attitude and try-hard party atmosphere lies a great game that, like a tibia at an extreme-sports event, is fractured into a thousand pieces. A shame. - Paul Taylor



level ramps up nicely as the game progresses. Even though it's a very forgiving game, GRID's flashback system returns, for better or worse. Though your default Scottish co-driver speaks in Sega Rally-ese - easy left, into medium right over crest - he can be altered to be technical, however if you can't decipher "100, four left into hairpin right don't cut," you're probably best leaving it at the default.

All these positive points are diluted by a litany of annoying and odious frivolities. Competitors love to chat during a race, either trash-talking or offering compliments

throughout. Each time you cross the finish line and place on the podium, fireworks erupt from the side of the track and confetti falls as the results table comes up, even after a rally which, according to Jayde Taylor, is "the purest form of off-road racing". Your rewards, apart from cash, are couldn't-care-less liveries and, incredibly, dashboard toys and windshield ornaments. Yep, guess we "just unlocked some pretty sweet stuff."

Gone, also, is the more detailed set-up. Settings for suspension, brake bias, gear ratio, etc. are defined only by 'low to high' or 'front

FINAL SAY:



Spectacular graphics

· Great handling



Bogus presentation

• Dumbed down

VERDICT: A solid racing experience ruined by being far too 'extreme' for its owr







KING OF FIGHTERS XII The king is dead



FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: FIGHTING
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: AIE
DEVELOPER: SNK PLAYMORE
PLAYERS: 1-2
PRICE: \$89.95

he irony runneth over. SNK Playmore, purveyors of some of the scratchiest pieces of gaming vile, has returned to the halls of dead horse flagellation and pumped out a crinkled bugger of a fighting game they dare call king.

King of Fighters XII is nothing but a smouldering, pandering cheap trick unleashed to placate that strange – but thankfully shrinking – race of arcade rats too gutless to play anything new. Compared to ancient titles like Street Fighter III it's painfully second rate. Compared to new throne hogs, like Street Fighter IV, it's garish roadkill.

For those not in the know King of Fighters is a plastic imitation of Street Fighter that features a similar but infinitely less satisfying brand of kung-pow chicken.

This time King of Fighters XII pretends it's doing something different by featuring 3-on-3 matches. Unfortunately, like everything else it tries to do, this is performed with the same panache one might associate with a dropped pie. While players select a team of three fighters there's no mid-battle swapping or crazy link-up moves. When one geezer bites it, the game pauses while it loads up the next grommet. It's not as if it should be comparing itself to Marvel vs Capcom 2 which mastered mid-round character swapping a decade ago.

Even so, that's where the risks end for SNK. Unlike Capcom – or even Midway – it hasn't tried to do anything else adulterous to the brand like rebuild it for the current generation of hardware. Nope, after rogering their 3D iteration with a pogo stick some years ago, SNK Playmore have returned to their dire fortress of two dimensional solitude. The result is on-screen dandruff. A new 2D fighting game should look like Snow White in a sauna. Instead King of Fighters XII gives us the seven dwarves chewing each other's bunions. Not only are the character models pixelated, but their overall design is flavourless.

King of Fighters is perhaps the laziest series in videogame history. It begs the question: what are the developers doing all day? For years we've sat back and cited the old adage "fans will no doubt love it..." We're not prepared to do that anymore. Admirers of this trollop need to grab a monkey wrench and lever their hands off this decrepit carcass. This isn't the king of fighters by any throw of the sceptre – just a joker telling the same flat jokes in a cul-de-sac with old, cold floors.

WORSE THAN BETTER THAN
STREET FIGHTER IV THE LEGEND OF CHUN-

A James Ellis





- Some fun background animations
- Forget innovation, this isn't even modern
- Brainless AI and horror visuals
- Lacking depth

VERDICT: Grey, old, and well beyond retirement, *KOF XII* is irredeemable.









CROSS EDGE

The most inessential fighting game cross-over of the year!

he absolute bare minimum of effort went into this production. NIS didn't phone this one in – it mailed it in. Every benchmark of excellence has been missed. The play experience is a lingering, sinking feeling, akin to that terrible moment when a teen-aged card collector realises that it is not gold he has hoarded, but worthless cardboard. Only two factors save it from complete functional oblivion. For one thing, it is not physically broken; we detected no game crashing bugs. You can gorge on the flavourless krill of the *Cross Edge* experience without worrying about it bricking your system.

The other is the fan-fiction-grade dialogue – there's lots of it. If you aspire to read flaccid tales of arbitrary video-game character crossovers, but are too lazy to log on to the internet (or to write them yourself), then *Cross Edge* has got you covered. And this is indeed a completely arbitrary tale. We learn that these characters have been plucked at random from their respective game worlds, and left stranded in a limbo they openly refer to as hell.

And judging by the sparse (crudely rendered) foliage, rolling greens, and occasional sand traps, hell is a golf course. A golf course where synth electric guitar music is piped in 24/7, and every 30 seconds or so spent on the world map triggers a random encounter with wandering monsters. These too defy reason and rhyme. We can see why you might be attacked by a pack of wolves, or a giant (crudely polygonal) bee, but why would wolves and bees join forces against you? Wouldn't they be fighting amongst themselves? Ecological consistency was clearly not a priority for the design staff.

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: RPG
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: AFA
DEVELOPER: NIS
PLAYERS: 1
PRICE: \$99.95

Combat is turn-based, and demands little of the player. A timer with around five seconds on the clock counts down between actions – plenty of time to swap to another character and press ② again to chain together a combo. Characters are represented on the game grid by crude little bitmaps, and in cut scenes by static reaction shots.

These are DS-grade graphics, but that's not the worst part. The overall graphic design is more than a little off, with cyberpunk allusions that only serve to cheapen the experience even further.

Yes, we get the purpose of the game: a structured means of wasting time for shutins and emotional cripples. The combat and exploration fulfill the same role as the plot in a porno.

Yet whereas the Final Fantasy

games (and all their ilk) at least have the fig leaf of respectability that decent production values afford, Cross Edge is exposed to the elements - the dangly parts of the narrative shrinking under chilled indifference. Even the odd bit of saucy dialogue from Morrigan can't raise an eyebrow; the voice actress sounds like she's only in this for the money. Yes, there's full speech. But the overall low quality harkens back to the days when speech was new. and developers flogged all kinds of shovelware to a public giddy on novelty gas. Avoid

♣ James Cottee

FIVE FOR

Cross Edge includes characters you don't care about from five different Japanese developers: Nippon Ichi Software, Capcom, Namco Bandai, Gust, and Idea Factory. Even if you like Etna, you're probably better off just playing through Disgaea again...





Some mildly smutty dialogue



- Tawdry graphics
- Clunky interface
- Shallow combat
- Endless, pointless grinding

VERDICT: A misguided farce, Offensive.







models. Though there's only

one body type for each sex,

the Creation mode is a time



THAN BETTER THAN



- Tonnes to do
- Stunning graphics
- Creation mode



No online multiplayer

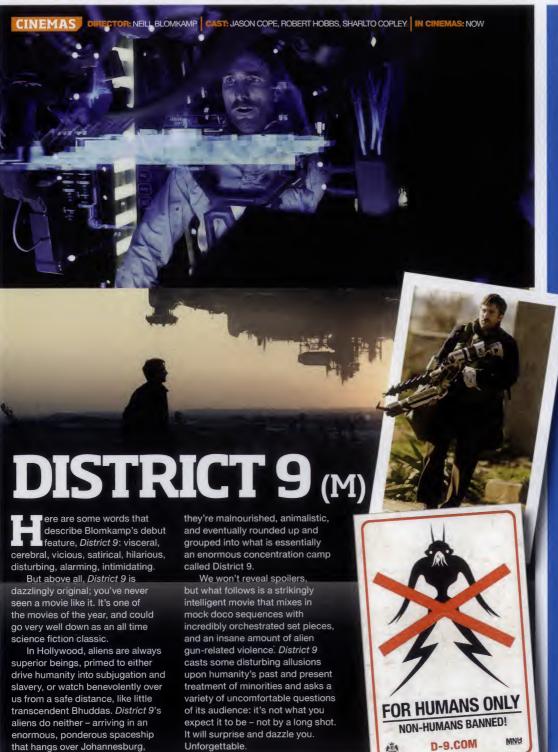
VERDICT: It's amazing this has been crammed on one UMD with little sacrifice Essential.





TERMISSION

On the screen



ALSO IN CINEMAS...

The Soloist (M)
Director: Joe Wright

Cast: Robert Downey, Jr., Jamie Foxx, Catherine Keener

While looking for a new story, Steve Lopez (Downey), a reporter for the *LA Times*, stumbles on a mentally ill homeless man, Nathaniel Ayers (Foxx), a genius at playing the violin and cellist. What began as one column transforms into a series, and their relationship from reporter-subject into a

friendship. Impressive performances from the entire cast make this a great movie to take someone you're trying to impress to show them you have some class.

Recommended.

The Taking of Pelham 123 (TBA)

Director: Tony Scott Cast: Denzel Washington, John Travolta, James Gandolfini

A remake of a movie that isn't a classic and wasn't screaming to be remade. Travolta plays the bad guy who hijacks a subway train and demands \$10m in exchange for a carriage full of hostages. Washington, as the guy who's on the other end of the line, steals the limelight thoroughly and convincingly while Travolta and his goatee never quite build up the menace required for a bad arse role. Despite the tension it's uttimately only a serviceable movie

THE BUZZ What's really going on behind-the-scenes

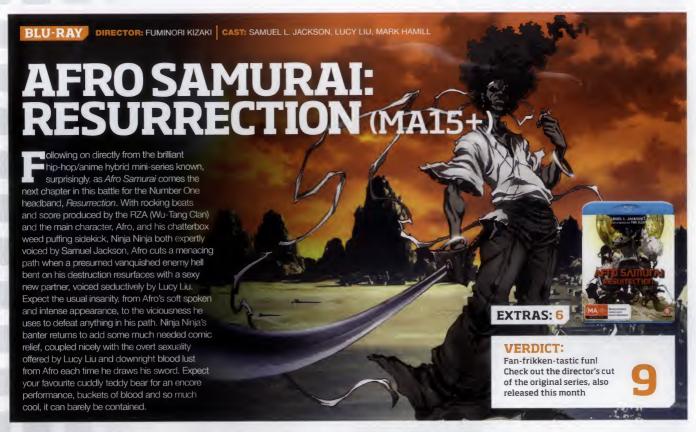
Remakes are so hot, they're permanently set to boiling point. This month we've seen a remake of an old film (*Pelham*), a film based on a book (*The Soloist*) and a film that expands on its short-film roots (*District 9*). Expect more works based on other

source material.

Coming up is *The Stepfather*, a remake of an '80s film of the same name. The children's books *Alice in Wonderland*, *Where The Wild Things Are*, *The Fantastic Mr. Fox* and *Little Red Riding Hood*, while video-games

are back on the sliver screen courtesy of *Prince Of Persia. Wild Things* looks like it'll be a visual treat. It'll have to be; the book it's inspired by only has 10 sentences, but remains as one the most revered illustrated pieces of literature of all time.





12 ROUNDS

Director: Renny Harlin Cast: John Cena, Aidan Gillen, Ashley Scott, Steve Harris

How the guy that brought us the awesomeness of Die Hard 2, The Long Kiss Goodnight and Ford Fairlane could direct this steaming pile of crap is beyond us. WWE wrestler John Cena is cop Danny Fisher, who ends up part of a deadly game of cat and mouse with an Irish adversary holding a personal grudge, running him through various action based and mental (apparently) hoops in a cruel series of games using his abducted girlfriend as bait. Even the drop dead gorgeous Ashley Scott did little to ease the pain. Honestly, we'd avoid at all costs unless you're a devoted Cena fan, or you're related to him.

STATE OF PLAY (M)

Director: Kevin MacDonald Cast: Russell Crowe, Ben Affleck, Rachel McAdams, Jason Bateman, Helen Mirrin

A tale of murder and political cover-ups seen through the eyes of journalists is the hook for this political drama. After a young research assistant is found killed, investigating journo Cal McCaffrey (Crowe) sees all roads leading to up-and-coming congressman and friend Stephen Collins (Affleck), but all is not what it seems. With a powerhouse cast, an impressive return to form by Affleck and some scene stealing contributions by Helen Mirrin and Jason Bateman, this is a well rounded thriller. Though it doesn't get close to the brilliant BBC mini-series it's based on, it's entertaining none the less.

SPLINTER (MA15+)

Director: Toby Wilkins Cast: Charles Baker, Jill Wagner, Paul Costanzo, Shea Whigham

After the umpteenth Saw movie and Hostel and its ilk, many thought the arse had dropped out the bottom of the visually confronting torture porn slant on horror. Not so.

After a camping weekend goes wrong, two couples have their fates intertwined. With one couple carjacking the other, tensions are raised, but throw in a parasitic entity that has its sights on all of them, and it reaches fever pitch. The last stand at a gas station shows some ingenuity as both couples battle the beast on their trail and each other. Slightly predictable, but reasonable fun while it lasts



Samurai Champloo From the makers of Cowboy Bebop



EXTRAS: 4



EXTRAS: 6

EXTRAS: 5

VERDICT: 12 Rounds? It felt like a TKO in the first to us

VERDICT:

An extremely watchable film let down by McAdams **VERDICT:** Proof that there's still life left in the horror genre

INTERMISSION

On the box



THE SIMPSONS SEASON 12

Director: Various

Cast: Dan Castellaneta, Julie Kavner, Nancy Cartwright, Yeardley Smith

This was by far one of the blockbuster seasons for *The Simpsons*, where they really hit stride, week to week. Who could forget Homer splitting the town in two after the new phone dialing codes are announced, or how he debased himself as Burn's "prank monkey" for some loot and a taste of the better life? What about the father/son grifting moments or when Lisa fools the duo into thinking they had leprosy, to give them a dose of their on medicine? Or the intelligent Homer episode, once a crayon was removed from his brain? Classic.

FIST OF LEGEND (M)

Director: Gordon Chan **Cast:** Jet Li, Billy Chow

Western audiences may not be familiar with this title, and it pains us, as this is one of the best and most intelligent martial arts flicks out there. A remake of the Bruce Lee classic, Fists of Fury, sees Jet Li step into some rather large boots indeed. Focusing on elevated conflict between Chinese and Japanese dojos in 1937 Shanghai, it paints neither side as hero or villain and has a surprising amount of depth to the story. Yuen Woo Ping, the genius who orchestrated all the kung-fu antics in The Matrix, was behind the brilliant choreography and the near 20-minute finale between Jet Li and the behemoth of a Chinese General is one for the ages.

LESBIAN VAMPIRE KILLERS (MA15+)

Director: Phil Claydon **Cast:** Mathew Horne, James Cordens

We've all been there before, casually taking a break from the norm to go camping in the UK countryside, when you luckily end up sharing a cabin with some scantily clad party girls. After much fun is had by all, you notice something peculiar about your bunkmates. They seem to be vampires... lesbian vampires! What are the odds? Watching a couple of every day schmoes take it to the unholy undead is an absolute riot, with battle cries of "bollicks", "lets avvittt" and one liners like "next he'll have me bummed by a big gay werewolf", it's hard not to chuckle through it.

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

American Dad

The wits behind Family Guy also make this laugh-fest





EXTRAS: 6



EXTRAS: 5

VERDICT:
This could be Shaun of the Dead 2

EXTRAS: 8

VERDICT:Watch this and remember how funny it *used* to be

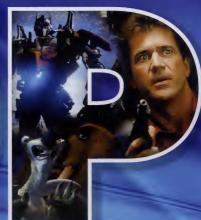
9

VERDICT: Simply the best Jet Li movie there is 10

ESSENTIAL READING FOR BLU-RAY COLLECTORS

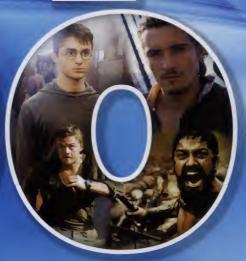












Blu-ray

A DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO THE BEST OF BLU-RAY

THRILLER • SCI-FI • ACTION • SUPERNATURAL • COMEDY DRAMA • KIDS • ROMANCE • ANIMATION





ON SALE NOW!

TERNET

PlayStation Network: Free to join, free to play!

LATEST

Download this...

Marvel Vs Capcom 2



This came in just a fraction too late for us to review this issue, but you need this game. Trust us. Beat 'em up fans? You've been called.

DC Universe Online trailer



Yes, it's massive for a video, but be amazed at the behind-the-scenes trailer of this hero vs villains MMO. Well worth seeing.

Gran Turismo trailer



The biggest and most authentic driving sim is on its way to PSP. Check out the GT-R and ZR1 in this short teaser.

Batman Arkham Asylum demo



What do you mean our review hasn't convinced you? Sheesh. Try a level as the Bat and see for yourself then. Do it!

Shatter



Yeah, a brickbreaking game doesn't sound exciting, but this is a major surprise. You'll love it. We do, anyway.

NEWS

BRAID

et your expression to 'excited'. The universally acclaimed platformer *Braid* is making its way to PSN.

Starring a young bloke called Tim in a dapper suit, it's up to you to traverse the time-warping levels, collect missing pieces of paintings and get to the princess. The catch is that each stage





plays with time in a slightly different manner, and becomes a puzzle within a puzzle: you might have direct control over time in order to manipulate the environment or your movements alone might control the enemies in the stage – it's truly innovative and is guaranteed to bend your mind. Throw in lush graphics and clever references to classic platformers and you have an essential download. We've seen the Xbox 360 version, and love it. The only thing that'll make it better is when we can have on our PS3.

We don't have a release date or price at this stage, though you'll be the first to know more once we do.



ROCK BAND UPDATE

This is Spinal Tap!



e are amused and delighted that the rock band that wasn't, but was, is now in Rock Band. Full circle, yes?

Spinal Tap's Tap Ten, which is really 11 tracks, is now available to download on Rock Band and represents the group's first album from the 1984 mockumentary about England's loudest metal band. Honestly, if you haven't seen the film, do yourself a cultural favour and check it out, then enjoy the irony by playing the following:

- "(Funky) Sex Farm"
- "(Listen to the) Flower People (Reggae Stylee)"
- "America "
- "Big Bottom"
- "Cups and Cakes"
 "Gimme Some Money"
- "Heavy Duty"
- "Hell Hole"
- "Rock 'n' Roll Creation"
- "Stonehenge"
- "Tonight I'm Gonna Rock You Tonight"

Each song is \$2.45, or the whole pack is \$17.40



ONLINE REVIEWS

INFO

GENRE: ACTION DISTRIBUTOR: SON **DEVELOPER: TITAN STUDIOS** PLAYERS: 1-PRICE: \$23.95

FAT PRINCESS

Baby got back... and front... and sides... and...

here is one type of gaming that is especially catered for by the PlayStation Network (PSN): the quickie game. Fat Princess - other than being the first game to deal with the growing problem of morbidly obese video game royalty - is the very epitome of the quickie game.

Primarily a multiplayer experience, the player drops into the game with 31 other folks and gets down to business.

Graphically, Fat Princess looks like a children's book come to life. Lots of loud primary colours with cute, cel-shaded customisable characters running around platform-game style environments - it's cuter than a puppy-headed kitten.

However, upon closer inspection you'll notice the little blokes are actually savagely hacking, stabbing, exploding or draining the life out of each other. Blood and limbs litter the battlefield. This strange juxtaposition of cute and hardcore gore is delightful and that's just the start of the good times.

Just because Fat Princess is a quickie, doesn't mean it lacks depth. You see the wee fellows come in five classes (which you choose by donning various hats) - we have the Worker, the Mage, the Archer, the Priest and the Warrior.

All classes are vital, and a smart team will utilise them all. The Worker can cut down trees and mine metal which can be used to upgrade the classes, strengthen the castle's defences and even build catapults or bridges into the enemy's base.

At their respective peaks the Mage can shoot fire and ice, the Archer has a crossbow and a ye olde style gun, the Priest can either infuse other players with health via a squiggly



WHAT'S UP? CHICKEN BUTT!

detonate big bombs and throw strange potions that turn people into chickens. The good news? You can still kill folks as a chicken. A chicken of doom!



WORSE THAN BETTER THAN KILLZONE 2 MULTIPLAYER BC MULTIPLAYER





line of magic or drain the life out of enemies and the Warrior can use a sword and shield or big spear... thingy.

So an army of Warriors, backed by Archers and Mages with Priests jacking up the wounded's health while the Worker sneaks around destroying and building can be very effective.

The 'fat' in Fat Princess refers to the fact you feed the Princess cake. Lots of cake. That way she's harder to pick up and nick. Watching the waif-like Princess turn into a Hutt-sized beast lady is a hoot.

As well as capturing the Princess, there are team Deathmatch modes, castle occupation modes and so on, but really a gory game of capture the flag where the flag can talk and be made morbidly obese is hard to go past.

At time of writing there are 10 maps and a fairly limited single player mode, however word is more is on the way.

Fat Princess is a funky, weird little title that is utterly charming and very enjoyable. For under \$25 it's an absolute steal and a great way to kill time or just get your quickie gaming on. & Anthony O'Connor



FINAL SAY:



· Cute carnage is absolutely delightful · Surprising depth of character customisation



- · More single player levels would have been nice
- The game depends on other players not being morons

VERDICT: Fat Princess has been on our radar for a while and it's good to see that it lives up to expectations.



TERNET

PlayStation Network: Free to join, free to play!



ONLINE REVIEWS

CALL OF JUAREZ: BOUND IN BLOOD

The Wild West puts its brand on multiplayer



GENRE: SHOOTER
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: TECHLAND
PLAYERS: 1-12
PRICE: \$109.95







WORSE THAN BETTER THAN
BATTLEFIELD 1943 CELL FACTOR





NO KISS KISS, NO BANG BANG

Taking a different path from the majority of semi-automatic shooters out there, Call of Juaraz: Bound in Blood cuts its sown with most weapons more of the 'slow on the draw' variety, leaving players vying for the top spot to duke it out on skill alone, rather than rate of fire. It takes some getting used to, but you'll find your game becomes a lot more deliberate and calculated, as opposed to the out and out fradfests that comorise most online shooters.





n an age of shooters where thousand upon thousands of shell casings litter the battlefield, air strikes decimate, mines, grenades and rocket launchers debilitate, it's a refreshing change of pace to engage in some well-executed and deliberate gunplay, smoothly cocking back the hammer and squeezing the trigger. It may not be as in your face, but it doesn't make it any less enjoyable or appealing now, does it?

Keeping with the dusty Western theme, all modes in Call of Juarez: Bound in Blood have a 'bounty' attached to kills instead of the usual XP to level up. Depending on the mode, you'll make a grab for big dollars and then either boost your character, or unlock one of the thirteen types available, each with upgradable weapons and capabilities. Some will send you to meet your maker, up close and personal, like the devastating double sawn-off sporting Hombre or the extremely powerful, yet weak bodied Duellist. Others prefer the silent but deadly approach, like the Spy armed with a Derringer and dynamite or the Native who'll run you through with a bow and arrow nice and quiet like. For those who walk the line, the Trapper, Gunsmith and Veteran all pack a neatly balanced punch.

'Wanted' is your basic free-for-all, with each kill gaining you cash, and 'Shootout' runs similarly, with an added bonus of putting a higher price on your head with each body dropped, so you become a bigger, tastier target with everyone wanting a piece of you. 'Manhunt' has one side running from the law, defending their boss, with the other binging them to justice in a hail of gunfire. 'Posse' is straight up team deathmatch, but all pale in comparison to 'Wild West Legends', by far the most fun and highly replayable.

Divided into teams of sheriffs and outlaws,

you'll walk in the spurs of some of Western's greatest heroes and most grizzly villains as you work your way through group objectives, 'til the inevitable shootout finale. The high point had to be the Showdown at the OK Corral, where we happily lived out our Wyatt Earp fantasies (the Kurt Russel one, not the Costner travesty). At the end of each round, they flip the script with a "revenge" match, where the law plays the lawbreakers and vice versa for a chance to even the score and enact a little payback.

All in all, we had a hoot and a half strapping on our six-shooters online. It feels totally different to the modern day shooter, it really gives you a sense of the era, and it's quite exhilarating shooting to kill, with each bullet having to reach its mark or it's goodnight Gracie. You may have a touch of difficulty finding a match (with just over a half-a-dozen available max at any given time), but once you get in there, you're sure to enjoy the ride.

♣ Dave Kozicki

FINAL SAY:



- A hair trigger is essential
- Relive The Fight at the OK Corral



- No concentration mode
- Loudmouth yanks online

VERDICT: Some thoughtful modes and re-enacting classic Western shootouts was the way to go Now draw, ya varmint!

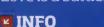




ONLINE REVIEWS

BATTLEFIELD 1943

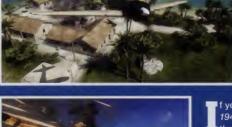
Love is a battlefield



GENRE: SHOOTER
DISTRIBUTOR: EA
DEVELOPER: DICE
PLAYERS: 1-24
PRICE: \$19.95















VALUE FOR MONEY

BF1943 never gets old. We can say that with absolute certainty because day has turned to night and back to da again. For busy, important guys like us, this is high praise indeed. Oh, go on then, one more round... If you haven't heard about Battlefield 1943 yet then it's time to crawl out of the wall space and turn your PS3 back on. Smashing first day and first week sales records it's comfortably the most downloaded game in PS3 history. So many people are playing it that it took a mere eight days for players to rack up the 43 million kills needed to unlock the Coral Sea Air Support mission. Talk about murder on the dance floor!

Except, of course, there is no dance floor. The action takes place on the beaches of Wake Island, Guadalcanal and Iwo Jima and the skies over Tulagi in the Solomon Islands.

Players are randomly allocated to the US Marine Corp (USMC), or Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN), although you can pre-arrange squads with friends, or set up private games if that's more your cup of tea. Each side has three classes to choose from – the Sniper, Rifleman and Infantryman. Pro tip: hooning around the maps as a Rifleman, blowing up unwary foes with rifle grenades is great fun. If that ever gets tired (it won't) you can always mix it up by stabbing snipers in the neck meat with your bayonet.

Game modes are limited to Conquest and Air Support. Conquest, if you're not familiar, is basically King of the Hill, with a number of strategic locations available for control. The more locations controlled, the quicker the victory. Boats, jeeps, tanks and fighter planes are dotted around the map to help change the tide of battle. Air Support is just that – a pitched air battle between the two forces, with no ground troops in the mix.

It's easy to see the limited maps and gameplay options as restricting, but it's actually anything but. With so few options to worry about, getting into a game takes moments. Once the game kicks off the action sucks you in so deep you forget about such piffling trifles as game modes and

concentrate on whupping ass.

WORSE THAN BETTER THAN

COD4: MODERN WAREARE SOCOM

For the most part it's seamless whupping too. The odd lag spike on Coral Sea was about the worst of it, and the frame rate is consistently smooth even in the thick of a hectic engagement.

When the action really heats up it's easy to get camped and it's not uncommon to be lumbered with a chain of spawn timers. Moving the spawn point to a carrier helps, but you lose a hefty chunk of time steaming back into the action.

That and the lack of maps are pretty much the only gripe, and they're minor ones at that. Seamless matchmaking and streamlined gameplay makes this an absolute joy to play, and we're sure that EA, masters of milking a franchise, will present some map packs soon enough.

Not only does 1943 breathe new life into a tired genre, it sets a new benchmark for the DLC to follow. Buy it. Buy it now!

& Alan Moore

FINAL SAY:



- Vehicles add an extra layer of hectic action, and everything works precisely as it should
- One of the best minimaps we've seen



- Needs more maps
- Getting camped is never fun

VERDICT: Truly an astonishing achievement. Insanely good fun, and the price is right.



TERNET

Gaming, trailers, downloads, friends...



ONLINE REVIEWS

FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 4

With absolutely zero Rocky puns

n Round 4, you box. That's it; there are no novelties as a diversion and we're perfectly fine with that, because the modes on offer cater to casual and dedicated pugilists.

Casual players, those looking for a quick knock-about, will happily jump straight into Quick Match or Custom Match. Here you pick your weight division, any round limitations and your boxer and you're in. Ranked or unranked matches are available, and you can choose to go against players of a similar ability, and even avoid people with a high DNF percentage. Those with flaky connections, however, will be at a disadvantage as DNF occurs whether you intentionally dropped out or not.

Where most of your time should be spent though is the World Championship.

Pick a created boxer and he'll be placed in to one of three weight-classes, and then goes against everyone else in the world to vie for the top spot. Smartly, your online-created player is completely separate from the offline doppelganger so don't worry if he bombs out in either mode. World Championship is like Legacy Mode in that you're engaged in a career, but you're battling against either much smarter or dumber players with real-world reactions; even now it's a tough slog to the top but the satisfaction here is immense.

The frustrations we have are purely technical. Sometimes it's impossible to get a match, whether creating or finding one, yet it was easy for us to connect to the World Championship. We tried later with no problems. Also, during rounds the game would stutter slightly, though definitely noticeable. We hope EA can patch these kinks out, as Round 4 is champ potential. •• Paul Taylor



VERDICT: Like offline, this is deep and fascinating. Almost perfect, if not for connection issues





WIPEOUT FURY

With great vengeance

t's easy to spout the numbers that make up Fury: eight new tracks, 80 events, 12 new ships, three new modes. 738MB in size. Like HD, a lot of the content is reworked from the PSP titles, Pure and Pulse, but that shouldn't stop you. For less than the price of your favourite magazine, you essentially get double what HD provided. And it's more than a bunch of extras.

From the front-end menu system to the overhauled ship design, game-modes to expanded sound track, *Fury* is focused on aggression with striking, swirling red and black being the predominant theme. Each team's standard race ship has been significantly altered, surgically sharper in appearance and capabilities with more points added to two of the four characteristics, and allotted in a manner that will make you question your HD team's allegiance.

The two most significant additions are Eliminator and Detonator modes. The former is familiar to PSP players, where the



aim is to race on infinite laps and gain points by damaging and destroying opposition. Winning is defined by the amount of carnage you cause. The twist is that at any time during the event, **1** will flip your ship around 180° so you can direct your barrage at the enemy on your tail.

Detonator is completely new, pitting you on a solo run with a low capacity machine gun against a mass of static targets that litter the track. As each lap progresses the velocity of your ship increases, like Zone, but any targets

you haven't cleared become obstacles to either dodge or clear. It's a technical event; expect to see monstrous high-scores on leaderboards soon.

Go download this now. 🕹 Paul Taylor

VERDICT: Slick, expansive and a design fantasy. The extra modes mean you should prepare to fall in love again.





ONLINE REVIEWS

FACTION ERRILLA: DEMONS

Get your arse to Mars, again, again

o you love bullets, booze and babes? Us too. It's the holy trinity in our book, and like us, if you got to the end of Red Faction Guerrilla (relax, it's a spoiler free zone here), you were probably wondering what the deal was with that sexy scientific marvel, Samanya, and wished that you could get a peek behind the scenes to see what she was all about. Volition has its finger on the pulse, and is giving you exactly what you wanted in a Marauder-based prequel covering sibling rivalry, how Samanya joined Red Faction, and a whole lotta guns ablazin', hootin' and a hollerin' as you give the EDF a serve.

Welcome to Mariner Valley, the spiky, speary, skull-tastic home of the Marauders, around about the size of any sector you've previously visited. Apparently, there's no love lost between your peeps and the local EDF, with most of your populace imprisoned, including sister dearest. Without blowing the whole plot, most of the main missions involve prisoner liberation on a grand scale. You see, Volition figure you've already knocked out the game by the time you get here, so they've juiced up the DLC with harder, larger missions (the finale taking around an hour), sub-bosses, and have replaced salvage as currency and instead, given you an automatic upgrade of weaponry on any mission's completion. It works surprisingly well, and urges you to knock each "Marauder Action" (as opposed to Guerrilla

Action) out to maximise your access to things that go boom.

Of the Marauder Actions, there's a few Raids, a couple of Transporter ones to tackle, but aside from the story missions, the remainder are all about Destruction. As you'd expect, they're puzzling to say the least, but immensely satisfying once completed, like taking out two buildings separated by a ravine with nothing but a mech walker, or jumping an EDF vehicle armed with a remote charge to destroy a building across a chasm. Fan-freakin-tastic!

Weapons have been seriously juiced up too. The rifle is replaced with a rather nasty spike gun, your remote charges now reside in the hilt of the curved daggers you sport and embed themselves in anything: walls, vehicles, heads, whatever. But the big daddy of them all is the pseudo rocket launcher known as the Missile Pod. This bad boy demolishes everything like it's nobody's business, with a high rate of fire, loads of ammo and more grunt than a beared Chuck Norris and Charlie Bronson love child.

With around five to eight hours of gameplay, depending on how anal you are about knocking out Pro times and collecting the 75 battery cores littered about Mariner Valley, this is killer value for money, with a explosive new arsenal and intriguing story, just icing on the cake. Get it now.

♣ Dave Kozicki



GENRE: **DISTRIBUTOR: THO** DEVELOPER: VOLITION
PLAYERS: 1 PRICE: \$15.95



YOU CAN'T TOUCH THIS...

Carrying on the rough as guts feel to this section of DLC is a smashing piece of Marauder Action where





INAL SAY:



- Sassy, sexy and spunky lead character
- Upgrades ahov!
- Outrageous new weapons



B-grade vehicles

VERDICT: This is how it should be done. Exceptional new content that gives you a mess of new toys to play with





SIGHT

Tips and cheats

ABEGINNER'S GUIDE TO... MONSTER HUNTER FREEDOM UNITE

It's the best-selling PSP game in the world. It's also the most challenging. Here are some tips for those entering the incredible world of *Monster Hunter* for the first time.

PREPARATION

Feel the burn

Monster Hunter is hard. Really hard. If you find that you're getting your arse handed to you, do not panic. This is normal. The whole game is a learning curve, stretching steeply upwards for 500+ hours. This suffering is worthwhile; for when you finally beat each new challenge, the satisfaction is magnificent. So, as Courage Wolf says, "Fall seven times. Stand up eight."

Try ALL the weapons

There are eleven classes of weapon. These are not rated by 'tiers' – all are viable against all monsters. The ones you end up using will come down to personal preference, so give them all a go – the ones you actually like may surprise you. For beginners, it's good to start with the hammer though.

Bring what you need

Preparation is paramount. If your mission takes you to the desert, take cool drinks. For the mountains, hot drinks. If you're hunting a monster that likes to jump between zones a lot (White Monoblos, we're looking at YOU), then Psychoserum is advised.

Shock traps and pitfall traps aren't just for tranquilising and capturing a severely wounded monster – the brief period they keep one pinned down can give you a vital window to lay in with some charged up attacks from a hammer or greatsword.

Flash bombs and sonic bombs can temporarily stun a wyvern, and in some cases knock them right out of the sky – this is another chance to plough into them. These tactics are not 'cheap'. Use what the game gives you. Do what it takes to win.

Going equipped

In addition to your supplies, you only get to

bring one weapon and one set of armour on any mission. Many weapons are imbued with elemental status attacks – fire weapons work great against ice monsters, for instance. If in doubt, just take the weapon with the highest RAW damage in your arsenal.

With armour, things really start to get tricky. You can wear up to five pieces: helmet, chestplate, waistcoat, gauntlets, and boots. Each piece will have its own bonus effects: Attack +3, perhaps, or Guard +2. Yet a skill only activates if you have a total of +10 across all the bits you're wearing.

Hence there is a definite incentive to wear matching sets. Your skill set can be further tweaked by adding gems into the sockets on each piece. There are dozens of skill gems available, granting poison immunity, higher chances of criticals, bonuses with certain ammunition classes... the range is staggering.

Most important of all: the skills attached to your equipment are the only 'skills' in the game. Your character doesn't have any, and never 'levels up'. So bring the right gear, or your battle will be over before it starts.

TACTICS

Keep moving

Even with high-end gear, a monster can kill you with just a few hits. Yet it can take more than half an hour for you to finish one off. So keep moving at all times — especially when they burrow underground. They usually resurface at your last known position.

Tapping **⊗** to roll can be a life-saver, too

— with a lot of charging monsters, it's possible to simply duck between their legs to escape.

Read their movements

At first, each monster will seem like an unpredictable juggernaut. Yet while their movements are random, their attack patterns

are pre-set, and predictable. What's more, there is always a 'tell' — a little twitch or movement that will hint at what it will do next.

When bubbles froth from the Daimyo Hermitaur's mouth, it means the giant enemy crab is enraged. Likewise when Khezu starts to gargle electricity, you can expect that blind, albino chicken to start moving at twice the speed. These movements also reveal weakness. When the Yian Kut-Ku's ears are folded back, it's severely wounded, and can thus be captured for extra bonus rewards.

The rare items you carve off dead monsters are used to craft your gear, so it's best to capture them whenever possible.

Sweep the leg

Each monster has weak points: the head of the Tigrex, or the base of the tail on the Monoblos. Many also have breakable parts that reduce their attack power. Smash the Blagonga's fangs with a fire weapon, and it can no longer stun you with its roar.

But when in doubt, sweep the leg. These beasts weigh tons, after all. Make one stagger to the ground, and you can get in some easy shots while it recovers.

ALL ABOUT THE BENJAMINS

Love that shit

As weird as it sounds, much of the game revolves around poop. Attached to the hub zone is Pokke Farm, a place you can harvest resources between missions. Crops only really grow well when you fertilise them, and that means collecting dragon crap. So whenever you see some tell-tale giant cow pats, press and scoop up all you can.

Abuse your pussy

Rather than using a BBQ spit in the field, it's far more efficient to pay the Felynes in

Words: James Cottee



your kitchen to cook up stamina-restoring take-aways. Also be sure to eat a meal before each mission – the ingredients you choose will determine the temporary stat boost you get. For instance, Great Mutton + Meatwagon = extra Health.

Play with your piggy

The brief mini-game you can play with your pet pig boosts the loot reward for your next mission. We're not making this up, we promise. Seriously!

While it's addictive enough in single-player, Monster Hunter really comes into its own when you go after a monster with your mates. And since Sony doesn't offer a service for PSP owners to play over the internet through their PS3s, that means one thing: if you want to try multiplayer, you'll have to meet other human beings in the flesh. You may even need to make new friends.

But rest assured: it's totally worth it. Happy hunting, people!

HOT TIPS!

Time for school, kids

In-depth tutorial modes are included for all game mechanics, and all weapons. Use them.

Take your single-player missions from the old lady by the campfire.

You can also take solo quests from the Guild Hall, but those are balanced for multiplayer. If you try them when you're starting out, you'll get hosed.

Combinations

Don't pay the rip-off prices at the vendors; combine your own gear. For example, Blue Mushroom + Herb = Potion, and Potion + Honey = Megapotion! Try every combo you can!

Mix and match

If you can't get the parts for a full armour set, then the 'Torso Inc' skill can fill in, like Choko in an apple pie.

Genprey Greaves have Torso Inc, as does the Giaprey Tasset.

Dig we must

Low on cash? Grow Power Seeds in Pokke Farm, and sell them. Too easy!

Swap meet

Those grumpy old orangeskinned men are the 'Vegge Elders', and they trade in superrare items. Thunderbug Juice? Striped Skin? They've got it... for a price.

I can't hear you!

Dragon roars getting you down? Get a set of Hornet Armour the High Grade Ear Plugs will make you immune to every roar in the game. Poison Hornetaurs to get the parts, and smash a Congalala's horn to get a Vibrant Pelt for the helmet.

Useful links

minegarde.com monsterhunter.wikia.com gamefaqs.com www.youtube.com/user/naijiao

And remember:

Monster Hunter fans are incredibly passionate and courteous to a fault – and they love to give noobs a hand. If you can't find an exact answer, enquire on a forum. Ask, and ye shall receive!

SIGHT

Tips and cheats

10 THINGS TO DO IN...

INFAMOUS

Good? Evil? Whatever your flavour, inFamous has got you covered. As you're gallivanting around the streets, here's a list of 'shockingly' awesome things to do when you're not protecting the innocent, or pillaging the innocent. Either way.



1 BAD TO THE BONE

If you're walking the dark path and get a double dose of power from the race sphere, you'll get a maxed out energy bar and your electricity will take on a black look not dissimilar to Venom, of *Spider-Man* fame, and his wicked tentacles. Nothing like enhancing the evil!



2 SHIELDS UP, CAPTAIN?

When you unlock the Polarity Wall and its upgrade, you can convert bullets or projectiles to energy. Disdainfully walk up to a turret, let him recharge your powers, slip around back and end his sorry existence. We're still laughing like maniacs.



3 EXECUTION

This is a vicious bit of work right here. Use Arc Restraint on any downed enemy and keep them pinned to the ground. Then casually saunter up to them and let a few thousand volts rip their body for a 1XP evil bonus. Nasty!



4 BAD MEANING GOOD

When you finish the game, and are left to knock out any side missions, why not work in reverse? Playing as Infamous, run around healing people, or bio-leech and go on a rampage if you're a Hero. See if you can pull yourself back to neutral or even change your alignment.



5 RUN WITH THE WRONG CROWD

Playing as Infamous, you'll get the opportunity to do some of the specific 'Evil' missions. A lot of these will have Reapers and Conduits as support as you assault Police and looks insane having Conduits port in and out, watching your back.



6 GIGAWATT BLADES

If you picked up the Special Edition, you'd have got a code for chock full of awesome Gigawatt Blades. These puppies give you a one-hit melee kill, look the shit, and pop out like a pair of electric Wolverine claws... snikttt!



7 FILL HER UP?

Several missions and frays erupt surprisingly close to the petrol station. Here's a fun fact... electricity + gazillion gallons of gasoline = bad guys ala flambé, explosions by Michael Bay. It respawns as well, so you can do it over, and over and over...



8 HAVE YOU MET MY FRIEND THUNDER?

Lightning Storm has to be the most God-like power there is, but why use it where appropriate? Why not take on a train mission and clear the tracks with some high voltage? You can easily recharge on the carriage.



9 EXCESSIVE FORCE

Once you're fully Infamous or Hero, go balls out on a mission letting loose Karmic Overload giving you unlimited energy for a brief spell. Lightning Storm works a treat, or as Infamous toss grenades and watch the clustering that follows annihilate all.



10 ALEX MERCER?

Try this on for size – using only melee, see how long you can last. Using dodging and Polarity Wall, you'd be surprised how well you fare, and don't forget about Gigawatt Blades too. Bring a little *Prototype* to *inFamous*.

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All the games that matter on PS3!

WANTED

My precious...

Renowned for testing the mettle of any PC that its original incarnation ran on, this sequel to the popular FPS, which saw all hell break loose about 11 years from now when North Korea invaded a fictional

island (attracting the Yanks and some aliens, eventually) uses a new engine that we're hoping pushes the PS3

JUST CAUSE 2 Also promising an

updated engine (which you'd expect as the last one was on PS2) and a fictional Asian island, this sequel will feature an even more

expansive sandbox for us to play in. We've been teased with new weapons, new moves and beefed-up Al that will see smarter baddies for

MAX PAYNE 3

It's starting to smell like Hollywood in here with all these sequels, not to mention release delays as this, like the two titles above, has now been shunted to sometime in

2010. The first in the Payne series not written by its creator, Sam Lake, we're promised an older, more jaded and effed-up Max who's hit the skids.

THE AGENCY

In the pipeline so long that we had to pump some Laxettes down there to try freeing up some new info. this MMO is still in the works. now promising a 2010 release. Doing the de rigueur

FPS thang, the player declares allegiance to one of two agencies before getting down to shooting, driving and spying

THIS IS VEGAS

Saved by Warner in its buyout of Midway, we have a soft spot for this one as any game that demands that we party hard is okay by us. The idea is that some business bloke is turning Vegas into a

family-friendly happy land, so it's the player's duty to drink, gamble, race cars and otherwise wheel and deal to restore the once adult paradise.

TORNADO OUTBREAK

From early tease ads some were speculating that this would be the latest from Metal Gear Solid creator Hideo Kojima, but they were wrong, mister If you can imagine a cross

een the Katamari series and Flower, then you'll be on the right wavelength Just replace the ball of crap with a twister

SIMPLY THE BEST.

The best of the best of the best of the best



GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

"GTAIV is a game 10 out of 10 was designed for - a game that takes your rising, constantly spiralling expectations and vapourises them with a product so sublime you'll tell your grandkids about it."

DEVELOPER: Rockstar North PUBLISHER: Rockstar PLAYERS: 1-16



BIGPLANET

"By rejigging the traditional platformer

with physics and an accessible level creator, LittleBigPlanet becomes something delightfully simple and postmodern - a game that everyone can play, and endlessly recreate."





DEAD SPACE

UNCHARTED:

DRAKE'S

FORTUNE

about it is it ends, but hot damn

it takes you on a transcendentally

you shouldn't buy this game."

DEVELOPER: Naughty Dog

PUBLISHER: Sony

PLAYERS: 1

enjoyable ride. There's no reason why

The only bad thing

"The best survival horror title this generation - by an absolute country mile.

Dead Space combines a smart story with incredible visuals, sound design to create what is arguably the scariest video game ever made. A must-play on every possible level."



DEVELOPER: Visceral Games PUBLISHER: EA





PUBLISHER: THQ PI AVERS: 1-16

RED FACTION

GUERRILLA

the highest calibre. A credible physics

package creates loads of 'must see'

moments, making this a game you didn't even know you wanted.'



DEVELOPER: Volition

MGS4: GUNS OF THE **PATRIOTS**

'An incredibly layered gaming experience that is almost inexhaustible. One of the best games available on the PlayStation 3, and definitely one of the top exclusives. Buy and play this videogame now.'



INFAMOUS

"The city you explore, the game mechanics, the story, presentation,

music and interface all conspire to play silly buggers with your perceptions of what video gaming is all about. Good for at least two playthroughs, the choice to use your superpowers for good or evil is, literally, in your hands,



FALLOUT 3

Taking the solid base of Oblivion and placing into a post apocalyptic

wasteland always sounded like a great idea - and Fallout 3 proves that concept brilliantly. This is a game that will astound you with the sheer depth and enormity of it's incredible vision."

DEVELOPER: Kojima Productions PUBLISHER: Atari PLAYERS: 1-16



DEVELOPER: Sucker Punch PUBLISHER: Sony PLAYERS: 1



DEVELOPER: Bethesda **PUBLISHER:** Atar **PLAYERS: 1**



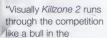


"Worth your sweat. The combination of two campaigns equals a respectable 20+ hours of gameplay. A must for those wanting something moody and fresh."

DEVELOPER: Starbreeze Studios **PUBLISHER:** Atari **PLAYERS:** 1-12



KILLZONE 2



proverbial china shop. Lucky then, that the game's design and story matches the lofty production values. *Killzone 2* is the first-person shooter evolved."

DEVELOPER: Guerrilla **PUBLISHER:** Sony **PLAYERS:** 1-16



disappointment. BUT you'd be silly to miss out on what is undoubtedly one of the landmark games of this generation so far. In many ways, this is a must play."

DEVELOPER: 2K Marin PUBLISHER: 2K PLAYERS: 1

BIOSHOCK

"As a sub-par port.

minus the promised extra

content, BioShock is a





"A fantastic shooter with a dizzying array of combat scenarios and packed with bleeding-edge military hardware. *COD4* is one of the tightest shooters we've ever played."

DEVELOPER: Infinity Ward **PUBLISHER:** Activision **PLAYERS:** 1-16

MODERN WARFARE



WARHAWK

"Tighter than a bull's arse on fight night and smoother than a glass

of Guinness, Warhawk is a seriously superior piece of software. Multiplayer only, but you'd be barking mad to miss it."

DEVELOPER: Incognito **PUBLISHER:** Sony **PLAYERS:** 1-32





THE ORANGE BOX

"The Orange Box is ripe, in season, and packed

with vitamin value. With five quality titles, including the sublime *Portal*, there truly is something here for everybody. An unmissable package."

DEVELOPER: Valve PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-16





CALL OF DUTY: WORLD AT WAR

"Superior in many

ways to even *Modern Warfare*, this is a surprisingly superlative piece of software. Powerful, well-produced, stuffed with violence – it's fantastic. The action is relentless, the visuals buttery-smooth, the intensity savage – we love it."

DEVELOPER: Treyarch
PUBLISHER: Activision
PLAYERS: 1-16

10



GHOST-BUSTERS

"Well-honed and accessible controls, some

spectacular visual effects, excellent pace, great level design, incredible attention to detail – all of these essential traits combined with the *Ghostbusters* universe and come together for a thoroughly addictive experience."

DEVELOPER: Terminal Reality **PUBLISHER:** Sony **PLAYERS:** 1-4





FAR CRY 2

"At times overstretching itself, Far Cry 2's breath taking ambition can

often be its undoing, but it's still one of the best shooters out there. Plus, setting stuff on fire is still a ridiculous amount of fun."

DEVELOPER: Ubisoft Montreal **PUBLISHER:** Ubisoft **PLAYERS:** 1-16

8

TOP 5

FORTHCOMING PSN



ALIEN BREED EVOLUTION

Before Team17 had Worms, it gave us Alien Breed, quite the homage to SEGA's ace Alien Syndrome, or Gauntlet with slimy things. Cue Unreal Engine noughtles makeover...



BRAID

Likely the most criticallyacclaimed downloadable ever on that other machine, we'll soon be able to see what the fuss is all about with this timebending platformer-meetspuzzler.



CASTLE CRASHERS

Another journeyman downloadable, this side-scroller with a bit of RPGness chucked in has won more awards than *Titanic* and has a totally kickarse four player co-op mode.



MILITARY MADNESS: NECTARIS

Some may recall this turnbased sci-fi strategy blast set on the moon from the PSX days. It's now being given a 3D spit and polish for military strategists to get all gooey over.



RETRO/GRADE

Innovation is rare nowadays, so we reckon this sideways scroller that you play in reverse like a rhythm game, to save the space time continuum, deserves some kudos for originality.

All the games that matter on PS3!

MAGIC MOMENTS



GAME: Cel Damage Overdrive CONSOLE: PS2 **YEAR: 2003**

THE MOMENT:

Budget games are crap, right? It's been the dictum of gamers since, like, forever.

The thing is that many a decent game has emanated from budget labels. Cel Damage Overdrive is no exception, a product of System 3's cheapie label, Play It.
That CDO is, for all intents and

purposes, old cartoon fave Wacky Races redesigned just enough to avoid the application of suing to arses was reason enough for us to pick this up initially, though we weren't super-enthused about the single-player mode.

So, we tried multiplayer, and BAM, things were happening stupid things, but non-crappy things nonetheless. Clonking a mate with a great pair of boxing gloves had a certain evil charm to it, as did ripping forth massive razor-sharp blades and thwacking foes fair across various landscapes with a freaking huge baseball bat.

However, the best was yet to come in a level reasonably innocuously, in the context of things, entitled 'Death Valley'. Looking a little like Roadrunner and Coyote territory upon first glance, it became more and more like it after a bit of a trundle around. Being slurped up by a massive cartoon tornado had us pining for our Warner Bros. cartoon DVD collections - and smiling more. Hurtling over a bridge only to have a trapdoor open and have us pausing in midair before sending us plummeting to our doom had us doing that much-touted 'LOL' thing, especially when we saw the little flumpf of dust and heard that "PAF! sound as we bit the dirt.

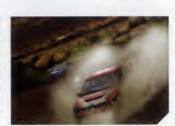
Yet the best was saved for later level, 'Mesa Madness'. Plunging over the edge for the first time we expected that annoying, yet strangely satisfying, "PAF!" once again. But no, the biggest cacks of all were saved for our vehicle of choice hitting barely visible powerlines many metres below which emitted a twangy "BOING!" sound, soon followed by the sight of our trusty OPSmobile sproinging back for more





"Pure shot straight from nowhere to rub MotorStorm's face in its glorious graphics and watertight gameplay. It's not as varied as its main competitor, but damn does it play well."

DEVELOPER: Black Rock PUBLISHER: Funtastic PLAYERS: 1-16



SEGA RALLY

"To appreciate Sega

Rally you'll have to

continually remind

yourself that it's a deceptively life-

like caricature of a hardcore rallying

experience. Not brain surgery, but it

delivers the fun in big muddy spades."



"An anemic game package that somehow survives by being what is quite possibly the greatest example of audio-visual excellence on the PlayStation 3 thus

far. Well worth checking out.' **DEVELOPER:** Polyphony Digital PUBLISHER: Sony PLAYERS: 1-16



DEVELOPER: Sega Driving Studio PUBLISHER: Sega PLAYERS: 1-6



COLIN MCRAE: DIRT

"The great man rests in peace, but his legacy

lives on with this stellar racer that brilliantly bridges the seemingly inpenetrable gap between arcade and sim. A seamlessly presented title that juggles depth and accessibility with a precise gusto."

DEVELOPER: Codemasters **PUBLISHER:** Atar PLAYERS: 1-16



RACE DRIVER GRID

"This bastard rock n' roll son of V8 Supercars and

Colin McRae: DiRT is hot. Your lower jaw will relax. Your eyelids will take five. And you'll start to drool. Shame it ditched its sim roots, but the missing in action V8 DLC has us all a quiver.



FERRARI CHALLENGE

"Ferrari Challenge will surprise you by being

that little bit better than you thought it could ever be. A hardcore racing sim that thrives on the details, this is a suitable title to fend off the petrol heads until Gran Turismo 5 arrives to rewrite the racing handbook."

DEVELOPER: System 3 **PUBLISHER: Red Ant** PLAYERS: 1-16



MOTORSTORM

"In our humble opinion MotorStorm was the best launch title on the

fledgling PS3 - and arguably it's one of the greatest launch titles of all time. Defining next-gen racing as a platform upon which smart Al and terrain deformation could thrive, MotorStorm reinvented the arcade racer.'

DEVELOPER: Evolution Studios PUBLISHER: Sony



MIDNIGHT CLUB: LOS ANGELES

Within its niche subgenre, MC: LA reigns supreme. Well designed, rolling objectives, and an insane amount of customisation, MC: LA manages to rise above the rabble, easily beating off Need for Speed Undercover at its own game."

DEVELOPER: Rockstar San Diego PUBLISHER: Rockstar PLAYERS: 1-16



BURNOUT **PARADISE**

"You'll lament the thoughtless removal

of splitscreen and the lack of a retry button, but you'll marvel at the slick frame rate, the sun drenched city, and Criterion's stellar commitment to free downloadable content. Awesome.'

DEVELOPER: Criterion PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-16



DEVELOPER: Codemasters **PUBLISHER:** Atar PLAYERS: 1-12



"A triumph. Harmonix has found the formula for a truly great music game - immaculate presentation, great tunes and a job for as many of your friends as possible. You wanted the best, you got the best." **FIGHT NIGHT** ROUND 4

> "A spectacular game. Deeper and more

technical, Fight Night Round 4 recreates the sweet science more faithfully than ever before. Remarkable detail, incredible animation."

DEVELOPER: EA Canada **PUBLISHER: FA** PLAYERS: 1-2



DEVELOPER: Harmonix PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-4



TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 09

"Golf, for most of the populace, is about as

exciting as watching paint dry in an old folk's home, so it's testament to EA that this game actually works well.

DEVELOPER: EA PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-16







SKATE2

Despite some frame rate issues, SKATE 2 is undoubtedly one

of the greatest sports game's ever conceived. The controls are flawless, the city is dense, the balance is sublime. Massively addictive.

DEVELOPER: EA Black Box PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-8





FIFA 09

"With it's new momentum physics, stellar visuals, and

engaging gameplay, 2009 is finally the year that the FIFA franchise manages to leap the perennial hurdle that is Pro Evolution Soccer. Now Konami have to play catch up."

DEVELOPER: EA Canada PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-20



GUITAR HERO METALLICA

"Guitar Hero Metallica improves upon GHWT in

a number ways - a more user-friendly HUD, superior presentation and more attention to detail. Great tracklist too. including 'Tuesday's Gone' by Lynyrd Skynyrd.

DEVELOPER: Neversoft **DISTRIBUTOR:** Activision PLAYERS: 1-4



TREET FIGHTER IV

SFIV is worth paying double for. Acquire on sight."

DEVELOPER: Capcom PUBLISHER: THQ PLAYERS: 1-2

NBA 2K9

"Basketball's hardly the national sport of

Australia, but that

game can't be fun. This is a decent

representation of Barack Obama's

favourite sport. Fans of basketball

should check this out."

DEVELOPER: 2K

PLAYERS: 1-10

DISTRIBUTOR: 2K

doesn't mean that the

"Capcom has been in the virtual brawling business longer than

anyone, and with its vibrant look, online mode and pristine gameplay,

the Davis Cup."

PLAYERS: 1-4

DEVELOPER: Sumo

DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA

SINGSTAR

VIRTUA

Virtua Tennis 2009 is still the most

enjoyable tennis game available today.

Along with player creation tools, the

biggest plus is the chance to play in

TENNIS 2009

"More of a tweak than a

brand new experience,

what it is: a sublimely developed party game

that cruelly exploits drunken girls and deludes them into believing they are 'SingStars'. Perfectly presented, and endlessly fun post-booze-fest."

DEVELOPER: Sony **DISTRIBUTOR: Sony** PLAYERS: 1-4

TOP 5

PSN ARCADE BLASTS



1942: JOINT STRIKE

nostalgia of the WWII shooter, but significantly beefed-up everything with new strategies required for widescreen play. Our fave = multiplayer.



BIONIC COMMANDO REARMED

Absolutely THE best way to get some hotdog-armed action. Capcom took all the good stuff from the original and turned it up to 11 for the best arcade update, well, ever



HEAVY WEAPON

Anybody who ever wast... erm, invested hours in the Amiga side-scrolling explosion-fest Silkworm will know the deal. PopCap has basically amped everything, and it rocks!



SHATTER

Breakout begat Arkanoid, and many years later the latte has 'inspired' Shatter, a brickbusting ball with weaponry and big bangs aplenty, even if it has



SUPER STARDUST HD

You won't get much better blasty bang for your buck than this baby, one of the first PSN games and arguably still one of the best. It's Asteroids on steroids, with added Trophies!



'Take SingStar for

FAMOUS

V8 Supercars 3



V8 SUPERCARS 3

King of the mountain!

his is a game that knows how to impress by numbers. Up to 21 cars in a race, over 80 tracks, 60 frames per second. It's admirable that this was achieved on aging tech, and sobering that these stats haven't been repeated in this generation. We're struggling to think of a racing game that's available right now that's tapped into the same fervent psyche as the V8 Supercars series, and still this third iteration improved over it's equally playable prequels.

On the grid at the same time as *GT4*, *V8* Supercars 3 still held its own as a serious sim, offering the options to extensively tinker with each car's setup. It was as accessible or as restrictive as the player deemed it to be.

Holding it back as the ultimate toy box was that a lot of the content was locked, only available after progressing through the single player Pro Career or World Tour modes. Implementing a strategy like this in 2009, where a good sample of the content in many racing games is available from the start, would prove frustrating. Yet, V8 Supercars 3 played to its strengths. You just want to race V8s? Pick the



UINFO

CONSOLE: PS2
GENRE: RACING
DEVELOPER: CODEMASTERS
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: UK
CURRENT APPROXIMATE
PRICE: \$14 (JB) \$29.95 (GAME)

'V8 Quick Start' icon from the menu screen, and four button-presses later you're in, racing through 13 tracks. Either the brave, ignorant or those familiar with the previous titles jumped in without practicing, as the options to turn off the advanced handling and damage tamed the unruly V8s. Hitting Mount Panorama and becoming a pinball through The Esses was the result of a headstrong driver.

Still, it was a game that appealed to the hardcore and casual players, and it was obvious that practice was the best way to emulate the Bathurst stars. Known as TOCA Racer Driver 3 in the UK, DTM Race Driver 3 in Germany and Pro Race Driver 3 in the US, it was the same game all over the world, albeit with localisations – and the content within made it a world game.

Codemasters, once the go-to studio for racing games, gave each type of vehicle an identity. From karts to Formula 3, buggies to truck racing, the characteristic of each is as solid as the variety available. It's a shame then that the future for the brand is currently in limbo. The Codemaster's follow-up, *Grid*, was rumoured to have a V8 DLC pack – with Bathurst as a new track – but none's forthcoming. Since the team's moved on the *DiRT* 2, was don't held much beau for it to

was rumoured to have a V8 DLC pack – with Bathurst as a new track – but none's forthcoming. Since the team's moved on the DiRT 2, we don't hold much hope for it to reappear. It's a testament to the strength of the game, then, that V8 Supercars 3 is still as playable now as it was in 2005. Paul Taylor

-

GIVING YOU WHAT YOU WANT

According to the official V8 Supercars website, the series is the third most watched sport on TV in Australia, beaten only by cricket and AFL. V8 Supercars 3, like the previous two titles, delivered what the fans wanted: the chance to race Holdens and Fords at Bathurst, and across the whole season. If this was a current gen title, we imagine the opportunity for DLC – updated cars, new tracks in the racing season – combined with the sport's popularity would be huge.





ISSUE 2 ON SALE AUGUST 14

NEXTISSUI

REVIEWED

Uncharted 2: **Among Thieves** FIFA 10

Wolfenstein

SuperCar Challenge

Heroes Over Europe

Need for Speed SHIFT

Guitar Hero 5

Marvel: Ultimate Alliance 2

The Beatles: Rock Band

Borderlands

Brütal Legend

... and more!

DECEMBER OF THE PLANT OF THE PL

The most hotly-anticipated shooter ever is nearly here, and we've played it!

PlayStation

ON SALE OCTOBER 2

Australia's favourite videogames mag!

Disclaimer: OPS will do everything within its power to deliver this content next month, but we can't be held at fault if things go awry or scheduled games slip and miss our deadlines!







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